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THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIANITY

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BY

THE REV. A. B. SHARPE, M.A.

"Cui æternum verbum loquitur a multis opinionibus expeditur."

—*De Imit. Christi*, 1. 3.

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P R E F A C E

THE following pages are an attempt to show the whole scheme of the argument for Christianity, in the natural order and connection of its different parts, and in the shortest possible form.

It is hoped that such a synopsis may be useful to those who have not the opportunity of consulting the various works in which the argument, or part of it, has been developed at length; but who have made acquaintance, as most people have, with the anti-theistic and anti-Christian arguments which have been widely circulated in the form of short essays, tracts, and catechisms, as well as in the more elaborate works of justly celebrated authors.

Such arguments, for the most part, attack one or more of the positions involved in the system of Christianity, but do not deal with the system as a whole; the entire subject is, in consequence, apt to be obscured by the elaboration with which individual points are treated,

and a false appearance of weakness is often imparted to the defence by assuming, for the purpose of attack, positions which, to say the least, are open to question, but which are not brought under discussion. Thus, for example, the credibility of miracles has been treated by some writers as if it were a question of evidence alone; whereas a little reflection makes it evident that though the genuineness of any particular alleged miracle can only be determined by testimony, the credibility of miracles in general depends primarily on our belief in the divine government of the world. Or again, the problems arising from the existence of evil have been indefinitely complicated, in the view taken by a recent writer, by the assumption that the main object of the Creator must have been the comfort of the human race; whereas, according to the Christian view of the matter, it was something altogether different.

In order to estimate the real force of this kind of piecemeal criticism, it is necessary to have before one's mind the general outline of the Christian system, and to keep in view the structural principles on which it is formed. The foundation of the whole is the existence of a personal God, manifested to the intelligence by the order of nature, not less certainly than to

faith by revelation : and its summit is the totality of revealed truth committed by Christ to the keeping of the Church. On the other hand, much of the destructive criticism to which the Church is subjected will be found on analysis to depend for its effectiveness on the assumption that the existence of a personal God is an open question ; much, again, is of the nature of *a priori* speculation on what such a God, if He existed, might have been expected to do, and has obviously no bearing on the question as to what, His existence being proved or granted, He has actually done.

I have therefore attempted to furnish such an outline of Christian principles as may enable the reader to distinguish, in each case, the real questions from the side-issues with which controversy tends to confuse them.

The method adopted is not controversial, and anti-Christian theories have been directly noticed only when it seemed necessary to notice them in order to make the positive arguments clear. Quotations and references have been altogether avoided, partly for the sake of brevity, but also because the value of such considerations as are here set out must lie rather in their intrinsic persuasiveness than in any weight of authority that may be claimed for them. No method of inquiry, on a subject on which authorities are

almost endlessly divided, is less likely to yield satisfactory results than that of balancing them one against another.

Nothing, however, that is said here is in substance original; and the reader who wishes to trace any of the statements and arguments brought forward on either side to their authoritative sources will have no difficulty in doing so.

A. B. SHARPE.

May 10, 1906.

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THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I

BELIEF IN GOD

It is evident that our first inquiry must deal with the question of the existence of God. For if this were doubtful, religion of any kind would be impossible : since religion, in the genuine sense of the word, means nothing else but the scheme of man's relations with God.¹ The term is indeed sometimes applied to systems of philosophy or ethics which profess to be able to dispense with those relations, but obviously in an illegitimate sense. The "religion

Religion is necessarily concerned with God.

¹ Buddhism offers no contradiction to this statement, though, since it is commonly called a religion and yet originally took no account of the idea of God, it may at first sight seem to be a contrary instance. Gautama did not intend to establish a new religion, or to discredit the theology of Brahminism ; his system, the aim of which was entirely practical, was not concerned with theology, as such. But later Buddhism has, by a natural process, constructed a theology of its own, and thus witnesses to the impossibility of permanently separating theology from ethics.

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of humanity” and other devices for producing “morality touched with emotion” may be considered substitutes, more or less inadequate, for religion; but it is only by a violent departure from the accepted meaning of the word that they can be called religions themselves. This consideration has an importance which does not belong to any mere question of philology, because of the fact that by the use of the title of “religion” or “Church” some of the propagators of anti-theistic principles have apparently sought, not without success, to obtain for their systems some of the respect traditionally associated with those titles.

Without assurance of God's existence we can have no foundation for religion.

In order, then, to have any foundation for religion in its true sense, we must first be convinced of the existence of God. Further, the God who is the object of religion must be something more than a mechanical First Cause, or a compendious expression for the hidden operations of nature. He must be a God with whom it is possible for us to enter into some sort of personal communication; He must therefore be Himself personal, and possess will, intelligence, and affections: otherwise religion would not differ essentially from scientific research. The God of religion must also be supreme and all-powerful, since if He were not so, there would be some other power to which higher consideration

God must be personal, omnipotent, etc.

BELIEF IN GOD

3

would be due than that which is due to God ; and in that case the religion of God could at best be only a subordinate cultus in a larger religion ; while the limitation of divine power by any mechanical agency would necessarily do away with religion altogether. We could not pay divine honour to a God of limited powers : we might or might not be able to pay such honour to the power which limited them, according as that power were or were not capable of entering into personal relations with us.

But a God of limited powers is really a contradiction in terms, according to the sense which the Christian religion attaches to the term God. This is implied in our present use of the term. The subordinate deities of the various heathen pantheons cannot be conceived of as gods in the sense in which we now use the word ; and the honours paid to them resembled more nearly the cultus of the Saints than the divine worship which the Church offers to God alone ; as the quasi-divine honour paid to Roman emperors, amongst other things, seems clearly enough to indicate.

The God of religion, then, is personal, supreme, and in all respects perfect. We have to consider what reasons there may be for the conviction that such a God exists. How do we know that there is a God, and that He is of such a nature as that which religion attributes to Him ?

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All know-
ledge from
sense and
reason.

The means by which we acquire knowledge of any kind are twofold. They are first sensation, and secondly reason. Sensation gives us physical perceptions; reason enables us to interpret our sensations, and to form conclusions with more or less certainty as to their meaning and origin. Revelation, and its correlative Faith, will be considered later as a means of acquiring knowledge: here it is enough to point out that whatever else may be said about them, it is certain that they presuppose both sensation and reason; since without sensation nothing could, under the conditions of our present existence, be revealed to us; and without reason we should be unable to attach any definite meaning to a revelation if we had one. All our knowledge, therefore, even including that supernatural knowledge which can only be obtained through revelation, depends upon the combined exercise of these two powers.

It is beyond question that we are so constituted as to be under a constant necessity of reasoning, no less than of experiencing sensations; and the two are so closely connected that it is not always easy to say where one ends and the other begins. Every lawyer is familiar with the witness who declares that he has actually seen what cross-examination shows him to have inferred from what he saw. Indeed sight furnishes a remarkable in-

stance of the interdependence of sensation and reason ; for example, the form of solid objects and their distance from one another cannot really be seen : they are inferred by a spontaneous and generally unconscious process of reasoning, by the aid of past experience, from the varying appearance of the plane superficies, which is really all that is presented to our vision.

Let us take a very familiar example of the use **Example.** of these two powers. Passing along the street, I hear through an open window the sound of singing. I cannot see the singer ; but reasoning from past experience, I conclude that the sound proceeds from a human voice and not from a phonograph ; by the same means I conclude that it is a man's voice, and not a woman's or a child's ; and again I form a distinct idea of its power and quality as compared with those of other voices. I am able further to reach a number of conclusions, of all of which I feel quite certain, as to the singer's personality : I am able, for instance, to draw certain conclusions as to his age and health, and as to the amount and kind of musical cultivation that he has received. But I can form no distinct idea of his personal appearance, nor even make a guess at his past history. None the less, I am certain that he exists, and that he possesses such characteristics as those mentioned.

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The inference
of God's
existence
universal,

Now, it is precisely in this way that the knowledge of God's existence is obtained. The world and its contents become known to us by means of sensation; and our reason infers from them their cause, which is God. Like the hidden singer, though he is and must remain, in some respects, unknown, yet the effects he produces enable us to reach certain infallible conclusions as to his nature and attributes. The world of sense is *tanquam pulcherrimum carmen*—like a beautiful song, from which we necessarily infer the existence of the singer, together with something of his character and qualities. It is upon this inference that natural religion is founded: and there can be no question that mankind does universally infer the existence of God, and within very wide limits, something of the nature of God, from the experience of the senses. Theistic religion of some sort is, and has been from the beginning, the result of the primitive and spontaneous exercise of the human reason. Our first proof of the existence of God is, that all men, everywhere, and at all times, have believed in it, as being the natural and inevitable conclusion from what they saw and felt around them.

in spite
of wide
differences
in religions,

Now the human race has had, and has still, a great variety of religions, of which the different features are to a great extent mutually contradictory.

But great as the differences are, nevertheless all religions are based upon the common ground of a belief in God as the creator and ruler of the world. In this connection, it matters little whether one God or many be conceived of—whether, so to speak, God is supposed to be a monarch or a senate; since however unphilosophical the notion of polytheism may be, and is, it is still derived from a chain of reasoning, which, when completed, issues in the belief of one God alone. Moreover, there would seem to be a more or less vague, but quite discernible idea of a supreme deity, *divum pater atque hominum rex*, underlying every known system of polytheism, and witnessing alike in the most primitive and the most civilised communities, to a necessity of thought resulting in a necessary conclusion. For the evidential value of the practically universal belief in God lies not so much in the mere fact of universal agreement (since there is no impossibility of the whole of mankind being mistaken on a mere question of inference) as in the necessity which it indicates of a universal process of reasoning leading inevitably to one conclusion. It is quite possible that mankind may be mistaken in any particular inference; but only when the inference is drawn from an incomplete knowledge of facts. Thus it was once believed universally that the earth was flat and that the sun moved;

and indicates
a necessary
procedure of
the intellect.

which was a perfectly just conclusion from the facts, so far as they had been observed. But when fresh facts had come under observation, a fresh inference was drawn, which reversed the previous one, but was established by the same methods by which the erroneous conclusion had been reached.

Now the fact of sensation is essentially the same thing, no matter how great the variety of sensations may be, or how the variety may be increased. More things may be perceived sensibly at one time than another, or by one set of persons than by another; but the fact that men perceive objects by their senses is one and only one fact, no matter what the extent of the perception may be. It is upon this one fact that the universal reason of mankind has based its belief in God. Men perceive an external world, which their reason assures them they did not create, and which they cannot control, and which their reason equally convinces them must depend originally and actually on some other power than that of any human being. No extension of the realm of sensible perception can add anything to the completeness of the experience from which this conclusion is drawn; since every fresh discovery in the sensible world is in kind only a repetition of previous experiences: there can really be no new sensations, so long as human senses

remain the same, but only new combinations and applications of them. The validity of the inference, therefore, by which man attains to the idea of God, cannot be affected by any conceivable increase in his knowledge of sensible things ; and its universality shows it to be trustworthy in the same way as that in which the universality of sensation gives us implicit confidence in the evidence of our senses. We are certain, for example, that we really see objects, because the rest of normal humanity does the same ; but if the bulk of mankind were blind, sight would probably be regarded as a disease, or at any rate would not be accepted as affording trustworthy evidence of facts. In like manner, if belief in the existence of God were an exceptional attainment of the human reason, we should have a strong reason for disbelieving its truth ; if mankind were equally divided on the question, it would have to be considered doubtful. But when every one under all circumstances comes to the same conclusion, by the same method and from a premise universally accepted as true, we have the most complete certainty we are capable of attaining.

It may, however, be contended that the consent **Objection.** is not really universal. Even if it is granted that mankind in general has, by a spontaneous and almost instinctive inference, believed in the existence of a God or gods, there are still exceptions to this

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rule ; and though their number may be comparatively trifling, their importance is to be found in the weight of their authority ; it is among the most learned and able that doubt or denial of the existence of God prevails. Does not their opinion, it may be asked, founded as it is on exceptional knowledge and intelligence, outweigh the verdict of the uncultivated reason of the rest of the world ; and in any case, does it not invalidate the evidence furnished by a consent which appears to be even numerically less than universal ? But plausible as this objection sounds, by reason of the weight and influence of the great names which can be quoted in its favour, a little consideration will show that it is really beside the question : it does not touch our argument at all.

Answer.

For that argument, as has been seen, does not depend so much on the fact that mankind consents universally to the belief in God as on the nature of that consent ; that is to say, on the fact that it is spontaneous and practically inevitable : and the value of it as evidence is not lessened because certain individuals have reconsidered their adhesion to it ; or because they have been artificially prejudiced against it. The fact that man is by nature carnivorous is evidenced by the dental formation and digestive apparatus of mankind, and the universal

appetite of the human race for animal food : and this universality is in no way impaired by the existence of some few individuals who have persuaded themselves of the contrary, and both live on a vegetarian diet and bring up their children to do so. In like manner men naturally and universally believe in God : some few individuals have persuaded themselves that they were mistaken in doing so, and may bring up their children in the same persuasion. But the spontaneous action of the human reason is not thereby impaired or invalidated ; the freedom of the human will, and its power to control the intellect, is illustrated ; but that is all.

Those who confine their attention to a special subject of study and investigation are apt to make of it, insensibly, an Idol of the Cave, which takes the place in their estimation of the axioms on which all reasoning is based : and thus the principles of physical science, or biblical criticism, or of any philosophical system, may come to be treated as if they constituted a universal solvent.

This is, moreover, equally true of both sides. The teaching of the Bible, for instance, has at various times been held to cover a very much wider territory than there is any warrant for assigning to it ; the natural science extracted from

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the Bible is, in fact, as little to be depended on as the theological (or anti-theological) conclusions

The scientific
"act of
faith." extracted from natural science. It is worthy of notice also, that science must always depend on what has been called an act of faith in the reality of the external world and the uniformity of its processes—that is to say, it must depend on the necessarily assumed correctness of those primitive and spontaneous inferences which have universally led mankind to the belief that there is an external world, and that the events which take place in it under any conditions will inevitably recur when those conditions are again present. But since all knowledge depends upon this confidence in the conclusions of our natural reason, in regard to the existence and nature of the external world, it would be a quite arbitrary and illegitimate proceeding to refuse the same confidence to that equally natural and primitive conclusion of our reason, by which the existence and maintenance of the world are attributed to God. Man has always believed, by a necessary and spontaneous inference, in the uniformity of nature; and in precisely the same way he has always believed in the existence of God. Those who have rejected this belief, on any grounds, have done so always by virtue of a secondary argumentation, from which the characteristic of

spontaneity is plainly absent ; as Berkeley rejected, in virtue of such an argumentation, the universal belief in an external world ; which in spite of him remains the universal belief still. It would certainly be the height of inconsistency to base a denial of the validity of our natural judgment in the one case upon an unproved assumption of its validity in the other.

We may therefore conclude that belief in the existence of God is practically universal ; and that it has the axiomatic character of those primitive conclusions of the natural reason, upon which all knowledge is founded.

CHAPTER II

PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

SINCE it appears to be undeniable that mankind necessarily infer the existence of God from the phenomena which surround them, the next thing

Nature of the reasoning by which God's existence is inferred.

we have to consider is the nature of that process of reasoning by means of which this conclusion is reached. It is not inconceivable, though it is in the highest degree improbable, that mankind might be deceived in such a matter. It is not inconceivable, since we are familiar with mistaken inferences; it is most improbable, because mistaken inferences are, generally speaking, the results of incomplete observation of facts; but (as we have seen) the necessary incompleteness of the observation of facts upon which our inference of the existence of God depends cannot in any way affect its correctness; and a mistaken inference on this point would therefore imply a congenital defect in man's reasoning power such as would go far to invalidate all reasoning, and

paralyse all thought, if it were really proved to exist.

However, there is nothing in the nature of things to make such a defect either inconceivable or impossible; and if any one is paradoxical enough to maintain that it exists, the only way to answer him is to show that the reasoning which leads us inevitably to believe in God is sound and trustworthy. This I now propose to do.

It must be observed, however, that we are by no means always conscious of a process of reasoning, even in cases where we are most certain of its conclusion. It would not be to our present purpose to inquire how this comes to be the case; and there is therefore no need to consider any of the theories on the subject which have been suggested—such as the illative sense of Cardinal Newman, or the idea of a subconscious process, or unconscious cerebration, by which a section of the school of physical science has formulated rather than explained the problem. It is enough to call the attention of the reader to the fact, which scarcely admits of dispute, that the mind is continually going through whole trains of reasoning without being definitely aware that it is doing so. It is, however, worth while to notice, in this connection, that reasoning can

Reasoning
often uncon-
scious.

only be unconscious when it is simple; it is impossible to reason unconsciously when two or more processes, leading to different conclusions, have to be compared. Now the possibility of adopting different conclusions on one subject indicates more or less of uncertainty in any conclusion that is eventually reached; and conversely, it follows that the mind must be more certain of one which is, or appears to be, the only one possible than of one which it has preferred to a possible alternative. But since unconscious reasoning practically excludes the possibility of any conclusion but the one actually arrived at, it follows that the conclusions which have been reached without any conscious reasoning process must be among the most certain possible. We may indeed be absolutely certain of convictions obtained by a laborious process of reasoning; but we must be certain of those obtained without it. It need hardly be said that men ordinarily believe in the existence of God without having consciously reasoned about it; and though in most cases something of the belief may be due to education, there is at any-rate a large residuum, without which the belief can hardly last long, and which is due to reasoning, in the vast majority of cases unconsciously performed.

Its conclusions are not invalidated by unconsciousness, but the reverse.

It is true that many, probably most Christians, believe in God, not on the strength of any reasoning, conscious or unconscious, but by faith—that is to say, on authority. But even in these cases, the traditional belief undoubtedly receives perpetual confirmation from the unconscious or half-conscious reasoning which keeps time with the ever-growing experience of life.

But however unconscious an individual may be of the mode in which he has attained to his belief in God, or in which he has accumulated confirmatory evidence of his belief, it is undoubtedly true that he recognises instantly the various stages of his unconscious argument when they are analysed and put before him. We do not indeed reach any of the practical convictions which play important parts in our lives by means of syllogisms or inductive methods; nor do we, as a rule, reason the better by having learned to put into form the modes of the mind's spontaneous action. Logical figures are really the *ex post facto* analysis of intellectual processes; and they derive their validity ultimately from nothing else but practical experience. They form, however, the one infallible test of the correctness of our reasoning, like the proof of a sum in arithmetic.

Bearing these facts in mind, we will now

consider the various modes in which, whether consciously or unconsciously, the mind can and does infer the existence of God from its experience of its phenomenal environment.

I. Motion.

1. One of our earliest and most constant perceptions is that of motion external to ourselves. From the character and circumstances of all the movements of bodies which we are able to perceive we are naturally led to the conviction that nothing moves itself, but that all motions of material objects are caused by something external to them. We conceive, in fact, a law of nature according to which the inherent and universal tendency of material objects is to quiescence. But then we inevitably ask, how did motion ever begin? If everything that moves is set in motion by something else, what was it that first set the material universe in motion? It is certain that something must have done so; and it is equally certain that this originator of motion cannot be moved by anything else, but by itself: otherwise it would not be an originator. Here, then, we have an idea of God, reached by a very simple, spontaneous, and absolutely irrefragable chain of reasoning. It is not, of course, an adequate idea; but it is evidently true so far as it goes; it presents God to us as the one independent Being.

2. Closely connected with the idea of motion, but 2. Causality. going somewhat beyond it, is the idea of causation. From our observation of the sequence of events around us, we become aware that certain sequences are invariable. We find, moreover, that our own voluntary actions are followed by unvarying consequences in both the moral and physical orders; by the exercise of our wills we cause events which otherwise would not take place, even though the extent to which we can individually affect the course of the world may be relatively quite insignificant. We are thus led inevitably to formulate a law of causation; nothing happens without a cause. Hence we conceive of a cause of causes—a power which both initiates the sequence of cause and effect in the external world, and is the cause also of our own existence and activity. The law of causation which we have been impelled to formulate absolutely requires such a cause of causes; for in formulating that law we think necessarily of a chain of causality; we trace in imagination the sequence of events back to its beginning; we reach the first link of the chain: and we are compelled to think of this First Cause as being itself uncaused: the first link of the chain is connected with the rest only on one side. But the First Cause, which is itself uncaused, is God: the self-existent Being, from whom all being takes

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its rise. Thus God revealed Himself to Moses as the one uncaused Being, the cause of causes, "I am," "Jahweh." Thus also He is defined in scholastic language as "*Ens a se*," the self-dependent Being. And thus by another and wider road we reach the same end as before; and as before by an unavoidable intellectual necessity.

3. Necessary
and contin-
gent being.

3. A very brief experience of life suffices to convince us that nothing in the phenomenal world is permanent, "*παντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδεν μένει*." But since everything we know might possibly not have existed, and will probably cease to exist, upon what foundation does the whole rest? We cannot think of a mere flux of things supported on nothing: we cannot imagine a series of kaleidoscopic changes without at the same time implying some permanent support upon which the changing elements perform their evolutions.

It is possible, undoubtedly, to suppose the changeless support of changing phenomena to be so called matter. But matter, whether analysed into a mode of "substance" or not, is in this sense unknown and apparently unknowable: it is a purely ideal conception, whether in the view of Professor Tyndall, as containing the "promise and potency of every form and quality of life," or in that of St Thomas as "*materia prima*," which is knowable only when determined by its form. If, therefore

we choose to assert that matter is eternal, changeless, and necessary, we cannot indeed be contradicted, but neither can we bring forward any reason for the assertion. Eternal, necessary, and changeless existence, on the other hand, is a necessary part of our idea of God; and we reach our conception of it simply and spontaneously as a necessary inference from what we know of phenomenal existence.

4. Our experience again shows us that as ^{4. Degrees of perfection.} a matter of fact, all that exists, whether animate or inanimate, may be the subject of a kind of classification: we perceive a kind of hierarchy of being, an ascending scale in which one is "more excellent" than another; there is a graduated ascent from a grain of sand to a Napoleon. All exist, each has a being of its own; but as we ascend in the scale new qualities are added which constitute the relative eminence and importance of each member of the series. Now if there is a cause of all, necessarily existing, of what nature must this cause be? Obviously, it must contain in itself all the perfections with which it endows in various degrees the forms of being which are dependent upon it. No one can give that which he does not possess. Therefore, God who is the originator of all movement, the cause of causes, the one necessary being, must

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possess absolutely and completely all those qualities which are partially manifested in creation. That is to say, God is the one perfect being. Since there are such qualities in creation as strength, beauty, love, intelligence, and moral goodness, God must be the all-powerful, the perfectly beautiful, the all-loving, the all-wise, and all-good. This is the natural and inevitable conclusion of the human reason ; and it depends on a process which, however crude in its simple and spontaneous working, is nevertheless perfectly just, and cannot be upset by any known argument or analysis.

Objection
answered.

It has indeed been somewhat hastily answered that if on the principles of the present argument God possesses all perfections, He must also possess all imperfections : if He is all-good, He must equally be all-evil. But it is perhaps hardly necessary to point out that imperfection and evil mean merely the absence of perfection and goodness in some respect or other ; and it is obviously impossible to possess all perfections and at the same time to be without some perfections. It is impossible both to have a thing and not have it.

Infinite
personality.

It should, however, be particularly noticed that one of the attributes which this argument must ascribe to God is that of personality. We need not now discuss the precise connotation of the

term; we are all aware of what we practically mean by it, even though we may be unable to define its meaning in words; and in ascribing personality to God, what we imply is that He in this respect resembles ourselves, though without any of the imperfections and shortcomings involved in the personalities of human beings.

But a difficulty is sometimes felt on this point. It is frequently supposed that personality necessarily involves limitation; but this we cannot ascribe to God, whose nature is necessarily infinite; and for this reason some have thought that though there may be a First Cause, either material or intellectual, the First Cause cannot be a person. Is it, then, impossible, or inconceivable, that an infinite person should exist; or, in other words, is limitation an essential part of our idea of personality?

Now it is quite true that all personalities with which we are directly acquainted are limited: but is it their limitation that makes them what they are, or something else, of which limitation is a necessary condition under the circumstances in which they exist? It is evident that all human persons are limited: they could not otherwise be persons. But their limitation obviously does not make them persons; it, so to speak, guards their personality, but does not constitute it. It

Objection
answered.

is a necessary condition of personal existence that it should be *incommunicable*; and in us incommunicability is ensured by our limitation as individuals—and apparently it could, under the conditions of human life, be ensured in no other way. But imagine a spiritual being—a disembodied soul, or an angel, raised to infinity; such a being would not cease to be a person by reason of the absence of all limit; but he would be a person *sui generis*—there could be no other like him, since there cannot be two infinities. Other persons might exist; but they would be on a different plane—the finite, and not the infinite. Thus our idea of the personality of an infinite God is formed: limitation is an imperfection, and when that is withdrawn, there remains the idea of an infinite and consequently unique personality. Hence it can be seen how God can be the creator of all that is, and yet not be limited by the existence of creation. Human beings do in some sense limit one another, since they are on the same plane of the finite; but God cannot be bounded by His own creation, since He exists on a separate plane, being infinite. It must be remembered always that the infinite is not the finite indefinitely increased, but a conception quite distinct from it.¹ The finite

¹ See note on Time and Space, p. 157.

therefore cannot limit the infinite, any more than an Act of Parliament can be limited by the number of individuals to whom it applies; it imposes a limit indeed, as the creator does on the creature, but the supposition of a converse process is unmeaning in both cases.

I do not say that the mass of mankind consciously reason in this way: it is certain that comparatively few people trouble themselves to define their conceptions of personality, infinity, or limitation, or even to give names to the ideas which those terms connote. But it seems to be quite beyond question that the spontaneous inferences of all men really imply and include all these intermediate steps; which, however, can only be realised *ex post facto* by a backward process of analysis. It is only when questions are asked that we begin, by a comparatively slow and laborious investigation, to realise the various parts of the argument which we have spontaneously and for the most part unconsciously constructed.

Again, I would call particular attention under **Conscience.** this head to the phenomena of conscience, and the manner in which we are led to infer from it the existence of a God who is Himself moral—or rather, whose nature is the norm of all moral principles. Whatever may be held as to the

nature of conscience, and the origin of our sense of right and wrong, it is an indubitable fact that we are under an absolute necessity of investing some at least of our actions with a moral quality. Now it is not possible to find any basis for this necessity other than the idea of God, which the mind attains by a primitive and generally unconscious induction; and which, whether consciously realised or not, gives us the ideas of a standard of conduct external to ourselves, and of a judge or critic, to whom our actions must eventually be referred for a final decision as to their moral character. It therefore follows that the existence of conscience is not indeed direct evidence of the existence of God; but that it is, in a very remarkable manner, evidence which refuses to be suppressed, of our belief in the existence of God, even though this belief may be latent for the time being; and of the validity of the argument given above, by which we spontaneously obtain the idea of perfect goodness and justice as attributes of the divine nature.¹

5. Design.

5. The four arguments we have now very briefly reviewed furnish a complete chain of inductive reasoning, resulting in the conclusion that God exists, not merely as the necessary

¹ See note on Conscience, p. 161.

originator of all being, or a sort of mainspring to the machinery of the universe, but as a person, possessing, in virtue of His essential nature, all those qualities which go to constitute the absolute perfection of a personal existence.

There is one further argument which probably counts for much in the reasoning by which we naturally attain to the conception of God, and which rightly understood is not less valid, so far as it goes, than those we have already followed. This is the so-called argument from design, which proceeds thus. We are struck, even on the most cursory examination of our surroundings, by the way in which the various parts of our total environment are adapted one to another, so that each contributes exactly what is needed to the general effect. The world, in Paley's well-known comparison, is like a watch, in which each part has its definite and necessary function; and the conclusion is drawn that the existence of such a machine implies an intelligent creator: as the existence of a watch implies that of a watchmaker.

Exception, however, has been taken to this method of proof chiefly on three grounds. Objections answered.

First, it is said that even granting that a watchmaker must have made the watch, it does not follow that he made the materials of which

its various parts are composed. Thus even if the arrangement of the various factors of the cosmos is granted to be due to intelligence, it does not follow that this intelligence belongs to a personal creator.

It may be readily admitted that this is true: but it is no disparagement of any argument that it does not prove a conclusion which it was never intended to prove. If the cosmological argument is admitted to show that the action of intelligence is manifested in the universe, that is all that it was ever intended to do. The previous question as to the creation of matter and the further question as to the personality of the divine being have been answered by other evidence, and other processes of argument.

Secondly, it has been remarked that nature is clumsy and wasteful. Her ends—supposing them to be ends, and not merely accidents—are attained often very imperfectly, and by means which do not seem to be ideally the best adapted to attain them: and she turns out a prodigious number of failures.

Granting these charges to be true, they have really nothing to say to the question whether the universe shows evidences of an intelligent design or not. It may be that the universe

might have been constructed on better principles than those on which it has actually been constructed, or it may not: we should be in a better position to decide the question if we knew more clearly than we do what purpose the various details of it were intended ultimately to serve. But the question now at issue is, not could the world have been made more intelligently than it has been made, but does the world as it stands show that intelligence is at work in it?

Thirdly, this question has been answered by some in the negative, on the ground that chance sufficiently explains the arrangement and combination of parts which produce the effects that are supposed to have been designed. It is as if a man were run over and killed by a motor car, and people admired the marvellous adaptation of motor cars to their supposed purpose of destroying human life. But motor cars were not, in point of fact, designed for that purpose: their suitability for it is purely a matter of accident, and we have no right to infer any such design on the part of the inventors from the fact that they do frequently act as engines of destruction. Thus (as was once said in reference to Prof. Tyndall's famous Belfast address in 1874) "teleology is rolled back upon itself." But is

it? Can we really suppose that the world we know is due to nothing but a "fortuitous concurrence" of its primordial constituents? If it were so, we should have to make one of two assumptions. Either there must be in the ultimate constituents of the material universe some principle which, if not intelligence itself, becomes intelligence by a process of development; or else the present order of nature is the result of mere accident. Either the original atoms, finding themselves in conjunction, set to work with something like intelligent design to produce the state of things we are acquainted with; or else the appearance of design in the latter has come about as the chance result of their blind mechanical action—as if, to quote an illustration, a haphazard combination of type in a printing-press should produce to-day's *Times*.

But to admit the first supposition is really to admit the force of the argument from design. The apparently intelligent arrangement of nature impresses us with the idea that this arrangement is due to a mind more or less like our own, which has made things as they are with the object of bringing about the results which actually occur: and the argument seeks to prove no more than the truth of this idea. It is not concerned with the question whether the intelligence

so manifested resides in a person or in a congeries of atoms; though comparison of the two theories in regard to probability hardly needs to be made.

The answer to the second supposition is that it is practically unthinkable. We have sufficient experience of the evidences of design in the various results of human activity to enable us to recognise similar results with certainty when we meet with them in nature. No one, in point of fact, fails to recognise in a motor car a means of conveyance, or supposes its destruction of life and property to be the result of design; we cannot refrain from teleology if we would. The only escape from this conclusion is to deny that we are ourselves intelligent designers, and to assert that we are mistaken in supposing our actions to be anything more than the consequence of those chance combinations to which the existence of the material universe is to be attributed. But again, we are so constituted that we cannot think of ourselves and our actions in this way; we cannot help acting and thinking on the supposition that we are possessed of independent powers; and a theory which we are forced to lay aside in practice cannot possibly be a true one.

We may, therefore, add the argument from

design to our list, as being not merely an argument by means of which we actually infer the existence of a supreme intelligence, but as being one which, so far as it goes, is legitimate and trustworthy.

CHAPTER III

CONTRARY ARGUMENTS

BEFORE proceeding to consider the one remaining point which will complete this brief review of the evidence for the existence of God, it will be well to sum up the conclusions which we have already reached.

First, we have seen that mankind uni-Recapitulation.
versally believes in God, by a spontaneous and practically necessary inference from sensible experience; and that the exceptions to this universality, if there are any, cannot invalidate its evidential force, because the negative conclusion is due not to the natural and spontaneous action of their minds, but to a forced and artificial intellectual process, which has really a totally different character from the primitive and untaught reasoning which is the ultimate basis of all knowledge. We believe in God by an inference of the same order as that by which we believe in ourselves.

Secondly, we have analysed the spontaneous

and often unconscious reasoning by which the human mind attains to the conception of God. We have found that it consists mainly of five arguments, from which we conclude (1) that there is a prime source of all motion, which must be itself unmoved, (2) that there is similarly a prime cause, from which all causation takes its rise, and which must be itself uncaused, (3) that there is a necessary being, unchangeable and eternal, which underlies the shifting phantasmagoria of sensible experience, (4) that this unmoved, uncaused, and necessary being contains in himself, as part of his nature, all the qualities of whatever kind that go to make up the perfection of the universe, and (5) that the intelligence which we find in ourselves, and are therefore constrained to attribute in an eminent degree to God, is further evidenced as one of His attributes by the intelligence manifested in the adaptation of means to ends in the external world.

The argument is, it will be seen at once, complete; it leads directly to all that anyone has ever claimed to know, revelation apart, of the being of God: it proceeds entirely on a basis of fact, and makes no assumption whatever.¹

We have now to ask what can be said

¹ A full consideration of the subject will be found in *The God of Philosophy*, by Dr Aveling.

against it. Leaving out of account a good deal that is merely irrelevant, we may, I think, fairly limit the objections that have been raised to the following: (1) it is contended that in inferring the existence of God from phenomena, we are fruitlessly attempting to transcend the boundaries of our possibilities of knowledge: we can know nothing but what is sensible; and sense gives us no direct knowledge of God. (2) The evidence adduced for the existence of God is insufficient to establish the conclusion. (3) The condition of the world, which God is supposed to have created and to govern, is not such as to warrant the conclusions drawn as to His omnipotence and benevolence, but is really irreconcilable with them. Three objections.

These are the only grounds on which our knowledge of the existence of God has been, or can be, seriously questioned. The vague doubt which exists in many people's minds is, in most cases at any rate, due rather to hearsay knowledge of the existence of a contrary opinion than to any definitely realised obstacle to belief; and such a doubt can only be removed by acquaintance with the nature of the arguments on which belief rests, as distinguished from the side-issues in which people often allow themselves to be entangled, and which divert attention from the real simplicity of the question at issue.

The answers to the first two, at any rate, of the above-mentioned three difficulties are so simple as often to escape notice by reason of their very obviousness. People "cannot see the wood because of the trees."

1. *A petitio principii.*

The first objection is nothing but a *petitio principii* of the most flagrant sort. The school of experimentalists which says in effect that God, if He exists, must be unknowable because we can know nothing but what comes to us directly through our senses assumes the question at issue; which is precisely whether we are not so constituted as to be able to infer correctly from our sensible experience certain facts which are not directly given us in that experience. That we do make such inferences is beyond question; and that those inferences are correct in proportion to the fulness of the experience from which they are drawn we have already seen. But our inferences as to the existence and nature of God are drawn from the totality of our sensible experience, and not from any particular instances; they can therefore lack nothing of the completeness upon which their truth depends.

Though our knowledge of God can by nature be only indirect.

It should, however, be noted here that no claim is made by Theists to any direct super-sensible or transcendental knowledge of God. Such knowledge would obviously be impossible

in our present state of existence, in which all our knowledge is dependent upon sensible impressions, and their surviving mental images, or phantasms. Thus we attain to the knowledge of God's existence and nature *per viam remotionis*; we know what He is by abstracting from our conception of Him those things which we perceive that He cannot be. Our knowledge of His infinity and eternity are obtained by removing from our mental conception of God the limitations of space and time: of His goodness, by removing the negative conception of evil: of His omnipotence, by removing the idea of any efficient obstacle to His designs; of His unity, by recognising the fact that we cannot, without self-contradiction, conceive the existence of more than one infinite being. But as to what infinity, eternity, omnipotence, and absolute goodness are in themselves, we can have no positive knowledge whatever. In this sense it is quite true that God is unknowable or incomprehensible: *i.e.*, His nature cannot be fully grasped by the mind. Yet "a man's reach must exceed his grasp"; we can and do know something of God's presence and nature at the point, so to speak, of His contact with ourselves; that is, within the sphere of our created environment; and from that limited knowledge we are able to form an

inadequate, because mainly negative, but so far as it goes, perfectly true conception of what necessarily lies beyond our experience.¹

“Anthropo-
morphism.”

One form of this argument is that which charges theists with anthropomorphism; the God of theists is, it has been said, nothing more than “a magnified and non-natural man.” Now the word “anthropomorphism” is very much misused by those who make this charge. Historically it signifies the ascription to God of a material nature—which nowadays no theist can be accused of. What it is intended to mean in the present connection is, however, that theists argue from themselves to God; their idea of the nature of God is based on their idea of the nature of man; and this is quite true, but it is not anthropomorphism or anything like it. Mankind finding in themselves a certain immaterial nature endowed with certain powers over their surroundings, conclude from observation and experiment that there exists, as the cause of all things, a being whose nature is immaterial like their own, yet infinitely powerful, and uniquely perfect; and it has certainly never been shown that this is an illegitimate inference. If this is to be called anthropomorphism, then we can only say that anthropomorphism is right.

¹ See chapter on Mysticism, p. 133.

Secondly, the evidence is said to be insufficient. Now if by this it is only meant that certain individuals regard the evidence as insufficient, the contention is of course undeniable. But, at the same time, it proves nothing. If, on the other hand, it is meant that the evidence is in itself and absolutely insufficient to establish the conclusion drawn from it, and that therefore it ought not to be regarded as sufficient by anybody, it may be answered briefly but sufficiently, that the evidence forthcoming has, in point of fact, been sufficient to induce the whole human race, prejudice and sophistication apart, to believe in the existence of God as naturally and readily as it believes in its own existence. Moreover, nobody will venture to assert what is necessarily implied in this contention—that belief in God can be due to nothing but ignorance or mental incapacity. It would seem to be somewhat fantastic to assert that evidence is insufficient for conviction which has, as a matter of fact, uniformly produced conviction throughout the world's history. Yet this is what the assertion we are considering comes to.

Again, it may be answered that the process of reasoning by which the existence of God is established is, when fully set out, a clear and definite one, and has a distinct argumentative

2. (a) Inconsistent with facts.

(b) Arguments cannot be set aside.

value, apart from the cumulative force with which it is invested by the variety of the considerations upon which it proceeds; it is not merely a conjecture or hypothesis, and therefore cannot be set aside, but must be either accepted or disproved. But as we have seen, it cannot be disproved except on grounds which would invalidate all reasoning and render all knowledge impossible.

(c) On the theistic hypothesis, no further arguments can be desiderated.

Further, it may be asked, supposing for the sake of argument that the facts are as theists believe them to be, what additional evidence can be desiderated, or imagined? A God whose nature could be the direct object of the senses would not be God at all, since His essential being would include the imperfect, because perishable or changeable, factor of matter: and if sensible perception is excluded, it is difficult to imagine any additional mode of knowledge beyond those at present open to us.

3. Would not invalidate the positive arguments, even if admitted.

The third difficulty is less simple, and deals with the very obscure question—obscure on agnostic not less than on theistic principles—of the origin, nature, and existence of evil. If there is a God, He must be good and omnipotent, and if He is good, He cannot wish evil to exist; and if He is omnipotent, He can-

not be obliged to permit it. Yet it exists, and consequently God must be either not good, or not omnipotent. So runs the argument.

We shall consider it more fully in a later chapter: for our present purpose, it need only be said that even granting that the above dilemma is unanswerable (which it really is not) it in no way invalidates the arguments for the existence of God which have been already touched upon. It would still be certain that God exists, and that He possesses the attributes which reason constrains us to ascribe to Him, even though it were not clear how His possession of them could be consistent with the present moral and physical condition of the world. The case would in fact be precisely analogous to that of the ether, which scientists declare must exist, and which nevertheless appears to possess mutually contradictory qualities. The apparent contradictions could no doubt be explained if we knew more about it; and precisely the same thing may be said—and with even greater certainty—of the existence of God and His apparent toleration of what is so contrary to His nature as evil.

The fact is, that no argument based directly on particular sensible experiences can really

Religion and
science.

touch the proof of the existence of God. It rests indeed in the last resort on the perceptions of the senses; since without them no knowledge would be possible. But its peculiar feature, as has been already observed, is that it is an inference drawn necessarily and inevitably, not from some particular sensible experiences, but from all together; it is not the number or kind of experiences upon which it depends that gives it force, but the bare fact that we do perceive an external world, subject to certain elementary laws; and thus the dawning intelligence of a child reasons in this respect—as in some others—as unerringly as that of the most learned and able of mankind. Physical science is really not in a position to say anything whatever on the subject, since however far it may extend the sphere of knowledge by its discoveries, it must still be confined within the limits of matter and sense; while everything we know or can ascertain of the nature of God must for ever remain outside those limits. Science and religion can never come into collision with one another; and it is only by misrepresenting one or the other, or both of them, that they have ever been made to appear to do so. An elephant and a whale, it was once said, in a very different connection from this,

can never make war upon one another: for neither can get at the other to fight him. It may be added, however, that they can make a superficially impressive demonstration of hostility by their trumpetings and splashings. Probably no analogy could more accurately represent the relations between religion and science than this.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOUL

Is there
more in
humannature
than the
physical
organism?

MAN, says Holy Scripture, was formed of the dust of the earth: or, as a more recent authority has preferred to put it, he is "a highly differentiated portion of the earth's crust and gaseous envelope"; and this is undeniably true so far as it goes. But the question we have to ask is whether man is anything more than this? That is to say, does he consist of body and soul, or is he only a body, to which belong the functions rational and spiritual, which have been attributed to the soul, and held to furnish a proof of the soul's existence? Is man, in other words, entirely material, or has he an immaterial part as well? For it is evident that the soul, if it exists, must be immaterial; since otherwise man would consist not of body and soul, but of two bodies, and so would be two, and not one individual.

We have seen that the universal belief of mankind in the existence of God depends to

a very great extent on the knowledge which man had, or thought he had, of himself: from his own spiritual and immaterial nature he inferred the existence of others, and of God above all.

If man had no soul, therefore, the argument for the existence of God would be very considerably weakened: nor, indeed, in that case could it greatly matter to mankind whether God exists or not.

What precisely is meant by the human soul? ^{Three} Evidently it has three functions. First, it is ^{functions of} the principle of mere organic life, such as is ^{the soul.} found in a vegetable. Secondly, it is the cause of sensation; which indicates a step higher in the scale of existence; and thirdly, it is the seat of reason which deals not with sensations directly, but with the ideas derived from them, and forms the ideas so obtained into propositions, arguments, and conclusions. It is evident that these are the functions of the soul; since they are plainly not functions of the material being alone, which loses life, sensation, and reason when, as is commonly supposed, the soul is separated from the body by death. But then it must be observed that this separation, or this cessation of life, only takes place when the material organism has received some injury, or

undergone some other modification, which renders it physically incapable of discharging these vital functions which are attributed to the soul.

Two theories
as to the
source of
rational life :
I. Material.

There are consequently two possible theories, of which we must adopt one, as to the cause of rational life, and of its cessation. On the one hand, it has been supposed that there is no need to attribute life and its cessation to the presence and absence respectively of any such entity as a soul: since all we are able to perceive is the material body in its various states: in a state of health it discharges, or appears to discharge, all the functions of life and intelligence, and it is only when its organic nature is destroyed that those functions cease. Nothing corresponding to the assumed nature of a soul can be detected by any kind of physical analysis—why, therefore, should we assume its existence, when the facts can be sufficiently accounted for without it? The theory, then, to which these considerations lead is simply that life of every kind, and intelligence, are functions of matter in certain forms and combinations, and are present or absent as the necessary result of their persistence or cessation. Moreover, it is not only the functions of mere organic life that appear to depend entirely on the material perfection of the body: thought itself depends

on certain modifications, more or less accurately traceable, of the brain and nerves; and it is contended that we have in these modifications a sufficient cause for the action of intelligence, without having recourse to the hypothesis of their causation by the soul. Again, it is to be noted that the functions attributed ultimately to the soul, of sensation and thought, are suspended while the action of the brain is by any means suspended or interfered with. Thus in the unconsciousness of a swoon, thought and sensation are equally in abeyance; and they are partially suspended, or distorted, in cases of partial unconsciousness, as in sleep, or in the hallucinations of brain disease. Hence, as it is said, it appears evident that life, and even thought (which has been supposed to be the distinctive function of the soul) depend entirely on the condition of the bodily organs, and must logically be attributed to them as their cause, and to them alone. Further, it is sometimes objected to the theory of the soul's existence, that if human beings have souls, there is no sufficient reason for denying souls, with all that they imply, to the lower animals. Thus if the poor Indian's untutored mind misled him in his expectation of his dog's company in the equal sky, as it is commonly supposed to have

done, he must have been equally misled in expecting his own translation thither.

But though it is obviously possible to hold this theory of rational life—since it is actually held by some, it is nevertheless open to objections which, in the belief of all but a very small minority of mankind, are absolutely destructive of it.

It will be best to state the general argument on the other side before indicating its particular applications.

2. **Spiritual.** It is held by those who believe in the existence of the soul that all men have an immaterial or spiritual nature, as well as a material and bodily one: the soul is separable from the body, and has therefore an existence independent of it; but the soul is not complete without the body, any more than the body is without the soul, but the individual human being is constituted by soul and body together. The soul cannot be detected by any physical process, since if it could, it would not be a soul: by its definition as something immaterial, it is incapable of material tests of any kind. But its existence is manifested by its actions; and these are first, as has been already said, life; secondly sensation; and thirdly reason. Now it is quite certain that in the human subject, organic life and sensation do not depend solely upon the body; since the body

may, for a time, exist in a perfect state without possessing either of these attributes — as, for instance, in the case of death by suffocation. It is therefore clear that they are due to the presence in the individual of something more than the mere physical organs. But it is when we consider the rational nature, that the action of the soul becomes clearest. For all the processes **Universals.** of the rational nature—thought, emotion, or volition—imply the existence in the mind of ideas: and those ideas are not merely transcripts or photographs of the impressions received from the external world by the body, but something further: they are universal, or abstract. Thus, for instance, I have a sensation of heat proceeding from fire, or of cold proceeding from snow: again, I have similar sensations of heat from the sun, from my own body, or from hot water; or of cold from the wind, from ice, or from a pane of glass. I naturally and inevitably identify the sensations received from all these different sources, and further consider this single sensation as an idea by itself—of heat or cold, simply, without attaching it in my mind to any cause whatever. Nothing could be more certain than that every rational creature is perpetually performing this very familiar mental operation; and it is equally certain that it is an operation performed by the mind and not

by the body. For when one considers the matter, it immediately becomes clear that heat and cold have never been perceived independently by my senses; they have always been closely connected with other sensations, the sum of which amounted to the perception of an object from which heat or cold seemed to proceed, or in which it appeared to inhere. In other words, my senses give me the perceptions of hot things and cold things, but not of heat or cold in themselves. Yet I certainly have the ideas very clearly impressed upon my mind of heat and cold simply, and I can think of them as existing quite apart from any object in which they may inhere, or by which they may be transmitted to my senses. But so far as my senses tell me, they do not exist in any such way. How then did I get the ideas? The answer, and the only possible answer, is that I abstracted them from the concrete perceptions of my senses. But by what means did I do so? Obviously not by my senses—since I have never had any sensation of heat or cold *per se*, but only of hot and cold things. But my senses represent all the powers that my body has of obtaining information. It follows therefore necessarily that there is in me something beyond my senses which is able so to deal with sense impressions as to form from

them general or universal ideas, or "concepts"; and this something is, in fact, the soul. There is no question here, it will be observed, as to the objective nature of these universal ideas: we have no need to consider the ancient controversy between Nominalism, Realism, and Conceptualism; since we have those universal ideas, or concepts, it matters nothing whether we perceive them as existing in the object of sense perception, or whether we construct them ourselves: in either case, we acquire and make use of them by the mind and not by the senses.

We can now turn to the counter-theory stated above. First, it is evident that sense perception is not sufficient to account for the facts; because the very important fact that we have universal ideas which are not given us through the senses cannot be accounted for in this way. It is no doubt true that mental operations are accompanied by certain modifications of the physical organism. But to ascribe thought to these modifications is to mistake cause for effect. There is nothing to prevent us from supposing that the mind uses the brain as its instrument, but we cannot suppose thought itself to be a function of the brain, because they belong to different orders of existence. There is no imaginable connection between the action

Arguments
against the
material
theory.

Mind and its
instrument.

of the brain, which responds only to material stimuli, and the generation of an abstract idea, which is essentially distinct from all material existence. It is not less difficult to conceive the brain as producing an abstract idea on its own account than to measure the distance from London Bridge to the middle of next week.

Self-con-
sciousness.

Again, the mind is conscious of itself. But if it were nothing more than a succession of physical states, this would be impossible. A succession has no unity, and cannot be self-conscious. Nor can a physical faculty be its own subject and object at once. We cannot see the faculty of sight, or hear that of hearing. But we can think of the faculty of thought. Hence it is plain that the thinking faculty must have a source that is different in kind from the physical faculties, and free from the material limitations to which they are subject. Here comes in the faculty of memory. We are not merely conscious of present individual sensations, ideas, and thoughts, but we can also recall those of the past; and we recall them not merely as experiences but as our own experiences. No matter how varied the experiences may be through which I have passed, or how greatly I may have changed in body and mind in the course of years, I am still conscious

of my personal identity, persisting throughout all the changes. It follows that there must be an unchanging substratum, underlying all changes, and unaffected as to its identity by them.

Thirdly, if the will is free (as we shall see later Free will. that it must be), its freedom must be the property of an immaterial and spiritual factor in human nature. For it is obvious that the senses and the physical appetites operate quite independently of the control of the individual—we cannot refuse to feel hot or cold, or to be hungry. But we control and guide these actions by our wills, often in opposition to our sensuous inclinations. Volition is therefore due to a faculty which is not subject as the senses are to the control of our physical environment; that is, it is the act of our spiritual nature or soul.

The relation which the brain bears to the thinking mind is therefore, as has been said, merely Suspension of mental action. that of an instrument: its modifications are not the cause of thought, but the effects of the thinking mind. It is thus clear that the entire or partial suspension of thought during certain physical states is due, not to the absence for the time being of the thinking faculty, but to the temporary disablement of its natural instrument. A violinist cannot produce music if the strings of his

violin are broken or out of tune; in the latter case he can produce a nightmare or delirium of sounds, but that is all. Nevertheless, the violin is not the musician, and can do nothing without him.

The loss of consciousness, as well as of the power of thought, during conditions of swoon or coma, on which special stress has sometimes been laid, is also a consequence of the relation between mind and body just stated. The mind cannot think while it has nothing to think with; and it is conscious of itself only as thinking, since the mind, being immaterial, can only manifest itself in operation—as the musician above-mentioned can only manifest his musical ability by playing: and while the soul and the body are joined together in their natural relation to one another, the exercise of the soul's powers is limited by the bodily organs. But when body and soul are temporarily severed by death, there is obviously no reason to doubt that the mind will be able to think without making use of any material organ, since the condition which made such an organ necessary to it will no longer obtain.

**Animal
souls.**

The question whether we are not, on these principles, obliged to assign souls to the lower animals, may be very simply answered. Not only animals, but vegetables also have souls: though

they are not of the same kind as human souls. They are not, that is to say, rational souls: but what scholastic philosophy calls sensitive and vegetative. The soul is in fact that elusive principle of life which physical research is unable to discover, but which is evidently the one thing that differentiates sentient and organic life from inorganic matter. The soul is again, in scholastic phraseology, the "form" of the organism, that essential principle which makes it what it is, and not something else. But no vegetable is capable of abstract universal ideas, nor, on a sober view of the matter, is any of the lower animals. Therefore their souls are merely the form or vital principle of their physical existence, without existence or action apart from it: so that when the physical organism perishes the "soul" perishes with it.

It is sometimes, rather extravagantly, maintained that animals reason, as human beings do, but no serious ground for such a belief has ever been brought forward, and it is needless to consider the question here. All that need be said is that if it could be shown that animals are capable of forming universal ideas, and combining them as men do in general propositions, then such animals would certainly have immortal souls, and we might expect to renew acquaintance with

our domestic pets—and possibly some domestic pests as well—in a future life.

Abiogenesis. Two questions which concern the origin of the soul may properly be noticed here. First, supposing that contrary to all experience hitherto, abiogenesis, or the spontaneous generation of life, were shown to be a fact, could this view of the soul and its nature still be held? Now if the distinction between the rational and the merely animal soul be borne in mind, it will be evident that such a discovery, if it were to take place, could make no difference to our view of the rational soul of man. Hitherto there has been no instance, with one still very doubtful exception,¹ of the generation of life by artificial means; but all experiments have had results of a directly opposite kind. If, however, against all probability, life could be shown to be spontaneously generated from matter, this would merely mean that the sentient or vegetative soul is a resultant from certain chemical combinations, and not, as has been supposed, the direct work of the Creator. But there is no more inherent impossibility in holding that animal life is brought into being by a certain combination of chemical substances than in the converse belief, which is incontestable, that

¹ Since this was written, Mr Butler Burke has stated that life has not been produced by his experiment.

it is brought to an end by the dissolution, natural or artificial, of that combination. If we can destroy an animal's soul, as we certainly can, there is no *a priori* reason why we should not be able to make one.

But the other question that we have to consider in this connection concerns the rational soul of man: and this, of course, stands on a quite different footing from that of the lower animals. Can we suppose it possible that the rational soul may have been evolved from inanimate matter? Without considering whether such evolution has actually taken place or not, is it to be conceived possible that it might have done so? To this it must be answered that so far as human reason can judge, it is absolutely impossible. It is inconceivable that matter should ever generate something essentially different from and independent of itself, such as we have seen the soul to be. The animal soul is bound up with matter, and is entirely dependent on it, and it is just imaginable that it may owe its origin immediately to it. But the human soul, though bound to a material body as its complement, is, as we have seen, immaterial in its nature; it is not essentially dependent on the bodily organs, but they on the contrary are dependent upon it. That matter should develop

Evolution
and the
rational soul.

a rational soul is therefore as unthinkable as that a son should generate his own father. No other origin can therefore be ascribed to the rational soul than that of creation by a spiritual agent whose likeness is impressed on it by those very characteristics which fundamentally distinguish it from all material being.

CHAPTER V

RELIGION AND MORALS

WE have now before our minds, as indubitable objective realities, the two terms of all human thought and action, the soul and God. There can be nothing more immediately known to us than ourselves, and the idea of God excludes absolutely any existence above or beyond Him. Our thoughts cannot begin with anything before the one, nor can they by any means proceed beyond the other. Our next inquiry, therefore, must be as to whether there is any necessary relation between these two extremes, and if so, of what kind it may be.

It is of course obvious that God and man are related as cause and effect, the creator and the creature. But is there anything permanent in this relation: or can we suppose that God, after creating the world, or any number of worlds, has left it to go its own way, without further care or interest in it? Now we cannot suppose this without contradicting that idea of

Divine and
human
relation.

God which we have seen to be true and necessary. Because, in the first place, God, as we have seen, is the one only self-existent being; all else is dependent on Him. But if a portion of creation were detached, so to speak, and went on existing by its own force, apart from the creative or sustaining power of God, then such portion would be self-existent — which is impossible.

Secondly, since God is an infinite intelligence, He cannot exclude any part of creation from His own knowledge; nor, since He is all-powerful, can any created thing force itself upon His unwilling notice. It follows that God must both know and be interested in all that He has made and perceives in existence.

It must be noticed, however, that this relation between God and His creation is what the schoolmen call intellectual and not real: it exists only in the mind, and is not essential to both of the related terms, *i.e.*, it is not a relation of mutual dependence such as the relation between paternity and sonship, or light and shade: a father cannot be a father without a son, shadows cannot be cast without light: but God would still be God, unchanged and unchangeable, if He were to annihilate all creation, or had never created at all. The case is pre-

cisely the reverse with regard to created beings; their relation to God is a real one, whether it is forgotten or remembered, known or unknown; creatures could neither have come into being, nor could they continue to exist in any form otherwise than in dependence upon the power of God.

This being so, it follows that mankind must necessarily conclude that their actions are not indifferent to God, and must further believe that they are able to please or displease Him, with the consequences of reward or punishment. That mankind has, so far as our knowledge extends, always believed this, is beyond dispute: and the belief is neither more nor less than the necessary logical inference from their belief in the existence of a personal God, who is all-powerful and entirely good.

Consequently, men have always attempted to gain or retain the favour of God by certain courses of action. These are two in number. First, since there is reason to believe that God is interested in His creatures, and watches over and regulates the circumstances of their lives, it is only reasonable to believe that God desires some reciprocal interest from them, and that He will be pleased by such interest being shown in Him, and displeased by its absence. In coming

to this conclusion, man reasons from his own sentiments and actions: and we have already seen that he is right in doing so, since his creator cannot but be like himself in all matters that concern his intelligence and emotions. Hence arises the necessity of religion—by which term is meant all that man does, with the direct object of commending himself to God, or of expressing the sentiments which the thought of his creator excite in him. Whatever form religion may have taken, this has always unquestionably been its ultimate object; and the base and grotesque rites of the lowest forms of religion witness no less than those of the highest and most refined, to that primitive impulse by which man seeks to show reverence to divine power, and to commend himself and his many needs to its care; just as the curious diet of blue clay which a certain American tribe is said to delight in, witnesses no less than the triumph of the most artistic *chef* to the primitive impulse of man to sustain himself with food.

and morals.

But the duties of religion, in the strict sense of the word, do not exhaust the relation of mankind with the Divine Being. As man is subject to divine power in every moment of his life, so it is reasonable to believe that all his actions are objects of divine interest: and men have

consequently always believed that though they were free to determine their course of action, within certain limits, they were yet held responsible for their choice by God, and must inevitably merit praise or blame, reward or punishment, according as they chose to adopt courses of action which were pleasing to God, or the reverse.

Thus we have obtained the idea of duty: or the idea that some actions are right and some wrong; that to do right is pleasing to God, and that to do wrong is displeasing to Him, or sinful. This is the fundamental principle of morals; since it is only by reference to the Divine will and the Divine justice that we can find any solid basis for the notion of duty—that we “ought” ever to do one thing rather than another. There are only two possible alternatives: one is to suppose that duty is based on what is due to myself, the other that it is based on what is due to the human race. But each of these alternatives requires something further to support it—and there is no support to be found. If we grant that we have within ourselves a law of action—a “categorical imperative”—which insists on our following that course which maintains the dignity of our higher nature, as distinguished from the lower, or merely animal desires, we are at once met with the question,

No basis for
morals apart
from the idea
of Divine
justice.

Why should I exalt my higher nature by the sacrifice of what after all will give me more pleasure than the following of the higher law? If I choose to destroy myself by sensual excess, or to obtain wealth by dishonest means, why should I not do so, if I like? What can the categorical imperative do for me that I should obey it; or why should I prefer the interests of my higher nature to those of my lower nature, if my inclination leads me to do the reverse? Or, if duty is said to be the line of conduct which is best for the human race; if I ought to "act so that my will may be law universal," I am again free to ask, Why? "It is not clear," said Professor Huxley, "what compensation the *Eohippus* gets for his sorrows in the fact that, some millions of years afterwards, one of his descendants wins the Derby"; nor is it any more clear what compensation a human being can get for his self-sacrifice in any advantage that his posterity may derive therefrom. What is the human race to me that I should deny myself for its benefit? If it pleases me to do so, well and good; but if not, how can I be obliged to obey any law but that of physical force? There is no answer to these questions, and if we wish to explain the idea of duty existing as a fact among mankind, we are forced back

upon the idea of God as presiding over the actions of His creatures, and holding men responsible to Himself for all that they do.

But when we have obtained the fundamental or formal idea of right and wrong, how do we know what things are right, and what are wrong? Have we a "moral sense" which guides us, independently of experience, or must we find out by a series of experiments? For our present purpose, which is to determine the necessary basis of morality, it matters very little which opinion we adopt. But it may be observed that there is at any rate no necessity for the former hypothesis; we can account for the genesis of concrete moral principles without recourse to any supposition which transcends the sphere of reason and experience. We naturally perceive, through even the most limited amount of experience, that certain actions are beneficial to ourselves or others, while certain other actions are harmful: some actions are in harmony with our nature, though they may be the reverse of directly pleasurable, and others, though pleasurable, are subversive of it. Sensual excess, for example, has a tendency to destroy the due balance of our natural powers; and fraud and dishonesty are injurious to our neighbours' interests. But our nature is the work, and in

Concrete
moral
principles
depend on
experience.

a sense, the property of God; and we cannot suppose that He wishes us to depreciate His property, or interfere with His work; and this is as true of our neighbours' interests as of our own personal nature; we cannot suppose that God will consent to the violation of the conditions which He has established as necessary for the due maintenance of His creatures. Some of the applications of these principles we perceive intuitively, *i.e.*, they are evident as soon as the circumstances of our possible actions become known to us: others are the fruit of experience, acquired and inherited. Thus the sphere of morality is constantly widening, as the sphere of human action is constantly extending itself; but its principles are simple, and unchangeable. A good instance of this will be found in the Church's law of usury, which was once absolutely forbidden, on the ground that it is contrary to the nature of money that it should fructify; but with the growth of modern financial operations, the nature of money has in a certain sense changed; from a mere measure of the relative value of commodities, it has come to represent various productive forces, such as mental and physical labour and skill; and therefore may be and is allowed to produce moderate interest without impropriety.

It has been asked whether right is right because it is God's will, or whether God wills what is right, because it is right. The answer is evident, on the principles just stated. God wills what is right, because it is right—*i.e.*, given the conditions of human life, it would be contrary to God's nature that He should will any other law of human action than that which we now perceive to be right in those conditions. Given those conditions, nothing else could be right, nor could God Himself establish any other law of right conduct than that which we know. But the existence of these conditions, and the consequent law of moral action, is directly due to God's will. Therefore it is also true that what is right is right, because God wills it. God could not make it right in this world to cheat or to blaspheme: but He could make a world in which fraud and blasphemy would be inconceivable, and in which the principles of morality might be applied in ways entirely inconceivable by us.

Moral principles are inherent in the conditions of human life: but these conditions depend on the Divine Will.

Man's relation to God, then, is expressed in the principles of religion and morals. In the former, God is directly approached in order to give Him that reverence which is His due, and to obtain from Him that assistance of which man stands in need: in the latter, God is indirectly

propitiated by the observance of those moral laws which man discerns as inherent in the order of things in which he exists, and of which he forms part.

Conscience, or the power by which we perceive the moral quality of our actions, whether merely contemplated or actually performed, is thus seen to be a mode of the intelligence by which the moral principles which we know as universal ideas are applied to our particular actions. There would seem to be no ground for the idea sometimes advocated, that either conscience or the moral sense is a special faculty by which moral principles are asserted antecedently to actual experience.

CHAPTER VI

REVELATION

HITHERTO we have been dealing exclusively with Natural Religion, or the conclusions in regard to the existence and nature of God, and of man's relations with Him, to which the human reason finds itself inevitably led by its necessary working upon its own surroundings. We have now to consider Revealed Religion; and in regard to this our method of procedure must be entirely different from that which we have hitherto followed. The truths of Natural Religion do not depend only on sensible experience: they are established by the mind, working according to its necessary laws. But revelation is a fact of experience. We cannot rightly say that there must be a revelation, on any grounds; its existence is, abstractedly, no more possible than its non-existence; the question is simply whether in point of fact a revelation has ever been given by God to man or not.

Revelation is a matter of fact, and is not to be dealt with inductively.

By revelation, in the strict sense, is meant a direct communication made by God to man, in regard to facts which are beyond the scope of human reason: an “unveiling” of that which is naturally and normally veiled. Revelation is thus sharply distinguished from the conclusions of reason, and from that indirect manifestation of God which, as we have said, is necessarily conveyed to the intelligence by the phenomenal experience of mankind. In a loose sense the word has sometimes been applied to this latter; but it is evident that the manifestation of God through phenomena is not, properly speaking, an unveiling. Phenomena are rather the veil, in the folds of which some outlines may be discerned of the form that it conceals; it is only when the veil is wholly or partially withdrawn that the form behind it can be rightly said to be revealed.

What, then, we have to determine is whether God has by any means or at any time withdrawn any part of the veil which hides Him from human knowledge, even while it gives infallible evidence of the fact that He exists behind it.

A priori
possibility of
Revelation.

It must be observed, first of all, that there is no antecedent impossibility, nor even any antecedent improbability, of His having done so.

Revelation is not antecedently impossible; for God is *ex hypothesi* omnipotent, and all things which do not contain a self-contradiction are possible to Him. It is not improbable; because God is, as we have seen, interested in His creatures, and has so constituted them that they naturally desire and try to know Him, so far as He can be known by them, and to hold some sort of communication with Him by means of prayer and worship. There is no improbability, then, that God's interest in mankind should lead Him to impart to them some knowledge of Himself beyond that which their unassisted powers can obtain for them, or that He should make some response to that desire which He has Himself implanted in them. It would indeed rather seem odd if He had not done so; at the same time, it must be freely admitted that any antecedent probability there may be that God may have so revealed Himself is no evidence at all in favour of His having actually done so. We have not the data necessary to make our judgement as to the inherent probability of such an event of any practical value, even if it were granted—as it seems by no means necessary to grant—that the likelihood of an event having happened is ordinarily of any weight in determining whether it actually has

No *a priori*
improbability
of it.

happened or not. All that *a priori* considerations can do for us is to clear the ground; there is nothing against the possibility of a revelation, and there is no such improbability about it as would render any special explanation necessary, beyond the mere evidence of the fact. If I am told that at a particular moment two straight lines enclosed a space, I can at once say that I do not believe it, no matter what the evidence may be, because it is intrinsically impossible; again, if I am told that the Archbishop of Canterbury has just been convicted of fraudulent enlistment, I cannot credit the statement until some explanation has been given of the reason for the occurrence of so improbable an event—as that he was insane or the like. There is no difficulty at all resembling either of those which the above cases present, in accepting the evidence, if it is in itself sufficient to prove the fact, for a divine revelation having been made to man.

A genuine revelation cannot be contrary to reason.

One other consideration must be noticed before we leave the *a priori* ground; a consideration which is of considerable importance in itself, and which furnishes a valuable negative criterion of the genuineness of any system of religion which claims the authority of direct revelation. It is quite obvious that we cannot

tell beforehand what any divine revelation may contain, since revelation can have no other object than to tell us what we could not find out for ourselves. But it is equally certain that there are some things which a divine revelation cannot possibly contain. It cannot contain anything which is contrary to reason; for if it did, God, who is the author alike of reason and revelation, would thereby contradict Himself. But reason, as we have seen, leads us to certain necessary truths in regard to both religion and morals. Revelation therefore cannot tell us anything which is contrary to natural religion and morals. It follows that any pretended revelation which contradicts our reason in either of these two respects must be rejected as spurious; though of course it does not follow that the mere accordance of a revelation with reason proves it to be genuine.

Now there are and have been a large number of religions which profess to be founded on a direct divine revelation, or revelations—all religions in fact, which have influenced any considerable portion of mankind, have made this claim, in one form or another. But with one single exception, they have all contradicted more or less the infallible conclusions of reason in regard to either religion or morals, or both. Thus a religion which is polytheistic cannot be

This criterion excludes all religions except Christianity

divinely revealed, since reason tells us that there cannot be more than one infinite being; or, again, a religion which is anthropomorphic (in the true sense of the word) cannot be divinely revealed, since reason forbids us to identify the divine nature with what is limited, perishable, and subject to change as a material body is. Nor can any religion be divinely revealed which directly inculcates such practices as polygamy, suicide, or anything else contradictory of the moral principles which reason perceives to be essentially true and necessary. But it is obvious to remark that there is no religion, except the Christian (with the Jewish upon which it is founded), that does not transgress in one or other of these respects.

Though religions of human origin contain truth.

It is undeniable, indeed, that many religions—probably all—which fail to substantiate their claim to be revealed, do nevertheless contain much truth, and many moral precepts of high value: had they not done so, they could hardly have gained acceptance, since in order to be accepted they must necessarily have been in harmony at some point or points with the common intelligence of mankind. But this amount of truth may be accounted for either by their embodiment of a fragmentary tradition of an original revelation, or by the direct over-ruling of

divine providence, or by the natural perception of truth and justice which belonged to their founders and exponents ; while their main structure must be ascribed to imagination, illegitimate reasoning, and the misinterpretation of facts.

It may here possibly be asked how, if human intelligence is capable of such aberrations as are manifested more or less in all religions of natural origin, we can be sure that the foundation upon which all religions are based, the belief in the existence of God and of the human soul, is not equally untrustworthy. If the various Pantheons are to be rejected as mere figments of the imagination, how can we know that the God whose existence reason obliges us to acknowledge has any stronger claim on our belief? The obvious answer is that there is a very broad distinction between the conclusions drawn at particular times and places from particular facts, with the imaginative superstructure often based upon them, on the one hand ; and on the other, the necessary and universal inferences of the human reason, drawn not from any particular facts or classes of facts, but from the nature of human experience in general. Any particular facts may be wrongly explained, for want of knowledge of other facts closely related to them ; and it is in this way that heathen mythologies and cosmogo-

No parallelism between mythology and natural religion.

nies have arisen, which have been discredited by the discovery of facts inconsistent with their truth. But the explanation given by the whole of mankind of the necessary cause of all facts, known or unknown, can only be discredited by discrediting human reason itself, and so making all knowledge impossible; in which case we could have no certainty of our own existence, and no means of distinguishing truth from falsehood in any sphere whatever.

The question, then, which we have to deal with is precisely whether the revelation to which the Christian religion ascribes its origin is genuine or not; and it will be well to state first exactly what the claim is that Christianity puts forward in this connection.

Origin of
Christianity.

It is asserted that the Hebrew nation was chosen by God to be the depositary of special communications from Himself, and to be under a direct divine superintendence which distinguished it from the other nations of the world, to whom only such knowledge of God was accessible as can be obtained by the light which reason throws upon the general providential guidance of all earthly affairs. The chosen people was further led in various ways to expect at some unknown date a fuller communication from God, and a more direct manifestation of His presence among them.

Throughout the vicissitudes of their history they clung with ever increasing tenacity to the belief in their actual privilege of being the chosen people, and to the hope of the coming of the Messiah—God's Anointed—to establish some kind of divine kingdom on earth, in the place of the theocratic government under which the earliest part of their national existence had been passed, but which had by degrees been withdrawn.

This expectation is said to have been fulfilled in the birth of Christ, in whose person the divine and human natures were believed to be united.

But the kingdom He established was not such as had been expected : it was not national, but world-wide, and not primarily or necessarily concerned with temporal affairs : its character was that of a spiritual and moral government, carried on primarily and essentially under spiritual sanctions.

But this kingdom did not at all correspond with the expectations of the Jews : it took no account of their national privileges, and made no improvement in their national position. Christ's claim to be the expected Messiah was therefore rejected by them ; He was treated as a tumultuary demagogue, and put to death by crucifixion after trial before the Roman procu-

rator on the information of the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities.

The "kingdom of God," however, established by Christ, persisted after His death; and under the name of the Church has overspread the world.

So far, the account which Christianity gives of itself is merely a matter of secular history. But it goes on to declare that the birth of Christ was miraculous; that His divine nature and mission were attested by the miraculous powers He displayed, by the influence He exerted over individuals, by the character of the moral principles propounded by Him, by the exact correspondence of His career with that foretold for the Messiah by the Hebrew prophets; and finally by His resurrection and ascent to heaven. Further, the Christian Church is said to be the depository of certain transcendental doctrines, made known by Christ, as to the nature of God, the union of the divine nature with the human in the person of Christ, and the nature, duties, and final destiny of mankind. The Church also claims a divine authority, given directly by Christ, for its pronouncements on spiritual and moral questions, and for its organisation; it professes to be entrusted with supernatural means for the restoration of fallen man to the divine favour, and for enabling him to

transcend his natural powers in obedience to the divine will; it claims to be able, from time to time, to exert miraculous powers like those of Christ Himself, and to have received a divine assurance of indestructibility, in virtue of which it looks forward to enduring till the end of time, no matter how its worldly fortunes may vary, or what kind of treatment it may be subjected to by its opponents.

From this slight summary, it will be evident that the Christian revelation consists of three parts—viz., first, that which is embodied in the special communications made by God to the Jews, and which is common to them and the Church; secondly, that which was communicated by Christ to the Church which He founded; and thirdly, that which is implied in the inerrancy and indefectibility which the Church claims as the special result of the continuous guidance and protection of God the Holy Ghost; and by which the Church is constituted the permanent channel of revelation. Threefold revelation claimed.

It should here be added, that certain portions of Jewish and Christian history, together with certain treatises on doctrinal and devotional subjects, which have been at various times committed to writing, are vouched for by the Church as being of divine authority, and as furnishing, The Bible.

though in a fragmentary and unsystematic manner, the earliest documentary evidence of the nature and extent of her claims. The Old and New Testaments, that is to say, though of immense importance in other respects, are in respect of their evidential value to the Christian religion nothing more than the permanent record of the traditional claims of the Church; since their credibility and supernatural authority must depend in the last resort on the Church's authority. There is therefore no need whatever of any discussion in this place of the results of the application of the higher criticism to the Bible. Whatever the date, authorship, origin, or literary character of its various contents may be, the Church vouches for nothing except that they are the divinely inspired history of her own origin, character, and ancestry. It is really impossible to set the Church and the Bible against one another: they stand or fall together.¹

¹ It should be observed that neither the nature nor the extent of inspiration, nor the evidence for it, is in question here. If the authority of the Church is accepted, the Biblical account guaranteed by the Church must be accepted also; on the other hand, the authority of the Church would be shaken if any guaranteed Biblical statement were demonstrated to be untrue, in the sense in which it is guaranteed. Such demonstration, however, is, from the nature of the case, scarcely conceivable.

The question before us now may be stated thus. First, does the Christian religion's account of itself adequately explain the facts contained in the history of Christianity down to the present time? Secondly, is there any other way of explaining them which there are better reasons for accepting than those which can be adduced on behalf of the Christian explanation?

Two questions as to the account given by Christianity of itself :
1. Is this account sufficient?
2. Is there any better one?

1. It must be observed that there are certain facts in the history of the Christian Church which are unique: they have no parallel or analogy in the experience of mankind.

Three facts to be accounted for.

The first is the vigorous persistence of the Church throughout every variety of revolution, social, intellectual, or moral. The successive political upheavals which have transformed the map of the world, and the social changes which have created a new atmosphere of thought, feeling, and action, have alike left the Church untouched. In the twentieth century she is as much alive as in the first, and maintains her solidarity of faith and organisation unbroken from the beginning.

1. The persistence of the Church.

The second is the remarkable way in which the Christian religion has adapted itself, without essential change, to every variety of national and racial character. Taking its rise among Orientals, it has attained its greatest triumphs in the heart

2. Its adaptability.

of the West; it has been equally at home among Byzantine controversialists, Alexandrian critics, the ascetics of the desert, and the matter-of-fact inhabitants of Rome. To-day there is no part of the world, however savage or civilised, where it has not at least a foothold, sufficient, if nothing more, to prove its suitability to the particular race and nation in which it is found, and to vindicate, formally at least, the authority it claims over the whole world.

It is hardly less remarkable that it started with a strong national prejudice, transmitted from Judaism in the most natural way possible; and that the insistence upon the cosmopolitan principles of Christianity to which the prejudice quickly gave way should have been due mainly to the two Jews, St Peter and St Paul.

3. Its moral system.

Thirdly, the moral system of Christianity, however much or however little of it may have been original, would seem from the very first to have touched the limit of possibility in this direction. At any rate, nothing in the sphere of morals has yet been discovered, or seriously suggested, by any non-Christian philosophy which has not from the first been embodied, at least in principle, in the Christian code; a fact which is substantially admitted by even the most extreme opponents of the Christian faith.

Now the explanation of these facts offered by Christianity is exceedingly simple, and at the same time perfectly adequate. It is to the effect that the Christian religion deals with the essential part of human life, not with its accidents; with the characteristics common to mankind, not those by which men are distinguished from one another as members of different races or nations, or as they are affected by the greater or less degree of civilisation they have attained, or by the various social and political institutions which prevail among them. This, again, is the case, because Christianity, alone among religions, was directly instituted by the only intelligence which was acquainted with human nature to its very foundations, and to the utmost limits of its possibilities. But no mere human being has known, or can ever know, human nature to this exhaustive degree; and the intelligence which has so adapted Christianity to all times and all possible circumstances and characters can only be that of its Creator.

Another very striking feature of the Christian religion which calls for explanation, is the curious commingling of success and failure which attends its efforts throughout the world. No religion has ever provoked the violent contrasts of individual feeling with which we are familiar as the result of the preaching of Christianity. It is

The
Christian
explanation.

Other
features only
to be ac-
counted
for by truth.

1. Mingled
success and
failure.

true that the mutual animosity of people of different creeds is a common one enough: the idea of a "holy war" is not peculiar to Christianity, if indeed it has any legitimate place in its system. But the passionate devotion to the religion of Christ, side by side with an equally passionate opposition to it, among individuals of precisely the same type, which seems to be the permanent condition of its existence in the world, would seem to have no parallel in the circumstances of any other religion. It is accounted for, simply enough, by that fundamental doctrine of Christianity which asserts that every individual is endowed with free will, and is capable, if he so chooses, of resisting the influence of divine grace; while, on the other hand, those who submit themselves to it are endowed with extraordinary and supernatural virtues.

2. The predictions of its Founder.

It is also worthy of particular notice that the above characteristics of permanence, universality, and moral completeness, were expressly declared by the founder of Christianity to be endowments bestowed by Himself upon the institution He founded: and that its strange career of mingled success and failure was repeatedly predicted by Him in the clearest terms.

3. Its exclusiveness.

Once more, a special feature of Christianity is its exclusiveness. If the early Church had

been content to take its place among the exotic religions—*religiones licitæ*—patronised by the Roman government, it would undoubtedly have escaped most of its early trials and persecutions. It was unable to do so, because it believed itself to be possessed of a divine revelation of absolute and final truth, and therefore could not, without destroying its own foundations, accept the toleration accorded to, and readily accepted by, religions which made no such claim. But such a conviction, prevailing as it did among Jewish converts, with at first but few others, and held by them at any cost of suffering and loss, seems unaccountable except on the theory that it was true in fact.

Lastly, though it may be possible to find analogies more or less strained in non-Christian religions, for some of the historical events upon which Christianity is founded, and for the doctrines which it teaches as divinely revealed: it is nevertheless beyond doubt that no such analogies were known to the illiterate peasants on whose testimony those events were first made known to the world. It is even less possible to suppose that such persons could have been influenced in a direction contrary to all their previous habits, convictions, and interests by any such analogies, even if they had been acquainted with them.

4. The ignorance of its first preachers of analogies in other religions.

We are therefore left to suppose that the Apostles believed in such events as the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension, simply because they actually happened; and that they believed and taught the doctrines of the Trinity, the Church, the Sacraments, and the like, because they had received them from Christ Himself.

Non-Christian explanations.

2. We have next to enquire what may be the value of any explanations of the facts alternative to those given by Christianity itself.

Unconfirmed negative hypotheses can have no value.

We have not here to consider the merely negative criticism which has been from time to time directed against the beliefs of Christianity. It is really nothing to our purpose to say that the witnesses on whose testimony we are asked to receive those beliefs may have been deceived, or may have been deliberate impostors; or that miraculous interference with the so-called laws of nature is less probable than error on the part of those who professed to have witnessed it. It cannot be denied that these hypotheses are in themselves possible: what we want to know is whether they can be verified or not. That is to say, we want to know what reason there may be for regarding the early history of the Christian religion, as embodied in the Gospels and the tradition of the Church, as a myth. That myths

Myth.

do grow up from no apparent foundation is undeniable; and their origin and development may be due to any or all of a variety of causes—such as hallucination, nervous excitement, imposture, and the difficulty experienced by most people in giving an accurate report of facts. But is the Christian religion the result of such mental or moral aberrations? If it is to be accounted so, we must have some direct evidence of the fact, beyond mere *a priori* considerations of probability. But the fact is that no such evidence has ever been produced; while the considerations which make for the opposite conclusion are of overwhelming force.

In the first place, we have contemporary documentary evidence for the belief of the Church from about seventy years after the birth of Christ—that of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Apostolic Fathers, and the early Church historians; the date may be considerably earlier, but it cannot possibly be later. We thus have a period of about twenty years in which the growth of a myth might have taken place: and there can be no question that myths have arisen within that space of time. But it is simply impossible that a mythical account of the nature and life of Christ, and of the character of the Church, should have got itself accepted

Documentary evidence.

unanimously among the Christians already dispersed throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa, in so short a time. Again, the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles were from the first received in the Church as true accounts of what was traditionally accepted by its members. But if these documents had, as the myth theory requires, proposed for acceptance an account at variance with the earlier tradition, it is practically inconceivable that they should have been received, as they were, universally and without protest, by the entire Christian body.

Thirdly, there is in the books of the New Testament a sobriety of tone, a matter-of-fact character, and a coherence, in spite of the miraculous events which they relate, which broadly distinguishes them from the fantastic and extravagant relations which are the invariable fruits of the mythopœic faculty in human nature. The mythical "Vengeur" went down with a crew of unanimous heroes and patriots; there was no doubting Thomas or faint-hearted Peter on board.¹

¹ The difference between myth and history is well illustrated by the contrast between the contents of the canonical gospels, and those of the ones called apocryphal. The latter are plainly a fantastic embroidery, by later and pseudonymous authors, upon the basis of historical fact recorded by the Evangelists.

Lastly, the historical development or explication of Christian dogma could scarcely have taken place upon a foundation of myth. Even if it were granted that such doctrines as those of the Trinity and the Incarnation, or the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility, were not already implied in the faith of the Church, it would still be incontestably true that it was by a very precise and logical scrutiny of that faith that they came to be defined as necessary parts of it. But a faith that had arisen in hallucination and wild fantasy would hardly be a possible subject for close analysis and logical explication. A foundation of reason and solid fact very frequently supports a superstructure of myth: but that the process should be reversed is unheard of, and is indeed scarcely conceivable.

Development
implies solid
foundation.

The only other suggestion that could be made to account for the origin of Christianity is that of deliberate imposture on the part of its propagators. But this has never been seriously put forward, and is so obviously out of the question as not to need consideration.

Imposture.

We are therefore left to conclude that the Church's account of its own origin and early history must be accepted as the true one. We have already seen that this account bears the

marks of truth in its exact adequacy to the facts which have to be explained. Had it been a false or merely imaginary explanation, it could scarcely have failed to be disproportionate to them by way either of excess or defect. But since it is in itself sufficient, and since there exists no counter-theory of any real weight, the truth of the Church's account of herself, and in consequence the credibility of the Christian revelation, must be held to be fully established.

CHAPTER VII

FAITH

It can scarcely fail to occur to anyone who considers such reasons for belief in the Christian revelation as those adduced in the last chapter that, however cogent those reasons may be, there is at any rate one fact which hinders their acceptance as entirely conclusive.

Conviction is not universally produced by the reasons given,

They do not produce universal conviction. On the contrary, there are many persons of the highest reputation for intelligence, learning, and sincerity, who hold them to be insufficient; though it cannot be denied that very many among those who hold firmly to the opposite conviction are no less eminent in respect of those qualities. But it would seem that reasons which fail to produce conviction in a considerable body of persons who have fairly considered them, cannot be considered as infallibly demonstrative of the truth of the thesis they are put forward to defend. The conclusion of a proposition of Euclid, for example, to which any considerable

number of mathematicians refused to assent, could only be accepted as certain with some reservation. But the Christian religion demands for itself an absolute and unconditional acceptance, no less than a proposition of Euclid. It may well be asked, therefore, on what ground this demand can be legitimately based.

and the
evidence is
not in itself
of the kind
that produces
absolute
certainty.

It must be admitted that the arguments for the truth of Christianity are not by any means of the same character as those which demonstrate mathematical conclusions; since the kind of argument which is applied to the demonstration of necessary and abstract truth can have no relation to questions of historical fact, as has been already pointed out. The angles of any triangle must be together equal to two right angles, whether any such triangle has ever actually existed or not. But the truth of Christianity depends entirely on the actual existence and occurrence of those personages and events to which it ascribes its origin.

Nor can the evidence for Christianity be of the same kind as the evidence for events that have occurred within our own time: it cannot appeal to our own senses—nor can we subject the witnesses to cross-examination.

It is, in point of fact, of the same general character as the evidence for any of the events

of antiquity which are generally regarded as certain, but in regard to the character and consequences of which more than one view may be reasonably held. Thus, while no reasonable person doubts that Julius Cæsar, or the Borgia, or Napoleon really existed, opinions vary quite indefinitely as to their characters, the moral quality of some of their actions, and the historical reality of others; and generally as to their proper place in the history of the world: so that however firmly one may hold one's own opinion on such points, one must do so under the reservation of the abstract possibility, at least, that the opposite opinion may really be the true one.

It is hardly necessary to point out that Christianity will not be satisfied with an assent of this kind, which admits the possibility of mistake. It is a peculiarity of the Christian religion, and not the least of its difficulties, that it requires an assent to its historical truth of the same absolute and unqualified character as that which we necessarily give to the reality of our own physical sensations, or to those truths the contrary of which is unthinkable.

But absolute certainty is demanded for Christianity.

Thus the world may be divided into those who give this absolute and unconditional assent to the Christian statements and those who,

whether believing them or not, regard them as matters about which there may legitimately be more opinions than one.

What is even more remarkable is that this difference of view cannot be accounted for by any perceptible difference of intellect, knowledge, or character in those who nevertheless disagree fundamentally on the subject. It is impossible to say that a Christian is necessarily more learned, intelligent, or honest than an unbeliever, or *vice versâ*: and this is remarkable since, as has been said, the difference is not one of opinion at all. Opinions may and must differ on almost all questions which interest mankind: but there are some truths as to which two opinions cannot be held. The Christian's belief in his religion is of the latter kind; the non-Christian's opinion of it is of the former. It is much as if one person were to declare that he is himself, while another asserted that the question is an open one.

Now this fundamental difference of view has been and is fully recognised both by Christ Himself and by the Church. No expectation was ever expressed by either that all who heard the gospel would believe in its truth, and no surprise appears ever to have been felt at the actual refusal of many persons to do so. Belief or

unbelief would seem to have been regarded from the first as a question of individual choice: and by consequence the former was held to be meritorious and the latter blameworthy. But obvious or necessary truth cannot be matter of choice; we cannot refuse assent to that which is obviously true, nor can such assent be meritorious, or its refusal blameworthy; we have no choice in the matter, and consequently it can have no moral aspect or significance.

Therefore it is clear that the Christian religion has never been proposed to the world as something to which no reasonable person can refuse credence; while it is equally clear that it is strongly held by believers that no well-disposed person ought to refuse credence to it.

Something more is therefore involved than a mere question of evidence. For, in the first place, evidence alone cannot produce the absolute certainty which the Christian religion claims; and, in the second place, the opinion which anyone may form of the value of any evidence is not a thing which can in itself be morally either right or wrong.

In the Christian view this further element of the question is Faith. Those who believe, it is held, do so because they have received and co-operated with the divine gift of faith: others

Certainty
is given by
Faith.

fail to do so, because, even if they have received the gift in question, they have neglected to make use of it.

We have therefore to enquire what is the nature of the gift or quality to which such important functions are ascribed.

We are not here concerned with any of the loose and popular senses in which the word is commonly used : but in order to understand its genuine import, it is necessary to distinguish two senses in both of which the word is used correctly ; and which are both distinct from the objective sense in which it is applied to the whole body of Christian doctrine in which faith is demanded.

Faith
defined.

Faith is, then, first a gift, or quality, or power ; secondly, it denotes the act of faith, or the use of the power divinely infused into the soul : as a person is said to obtain strength by suitable training and diet, and to exhibit the strength so obtained when he performs an athletic feat. But the acquisition of strength does not necessarily imply its exercise ; nor does the gift of faith necessarily imply the act, though it necessarily makes the act possible. Faith is first the power to believe ; secondly the act of believing, which could not have been performed unless the power had first been bestowed.

The gift of faith may then be defined as a

supernatural illumination of the intellect, by which it is enabled to perceive and hold the truths revealed by divine authority.

It follows that the gift of faith is not something superadded to the natural faculties; it is said by theologians to "perfect" the intellect; but it does not either supersede it, or interfere in any way with its natural and normal method of operation. Hence it will be perceived that faith cannot be opposed to reason, any more than light can be contrary to vision; but revealed truth is perceived by the reason through the light of faith, as sensible objects are perceived by the eye by means of natural light.

It is not so easy (and it is after all not necessary) to determine what the precise nature of the illumination which faith gives may be. It is probably more or less akin to that of the power by which the natural reason perceives natural truth, with more or less of clearness, according to the intellectual capacity of the individual; and of this power we can say with certainty little more than that it exists; its nature is necessarily obscure. But the analogy of natural reason does seem to throw some light upon the way in which the gift of faith may be supposed to produce its effects. Our minds very commonly pass quite unconsciously through some

Does not
supersede
natural
powers.

Its mode of
operation.

kind of natural change, by which truths formerly unperceived become clear to us, and arguments which formerly had little weight, now appear to be conclusive.

The change in question may in some cases be a purely intellectual process, by which our impressions are re-arranged in an order more exactly corresponding than before to the objective reality from which they are derived: in other cases it may consist merely in the removal of some prejudice, which circumstances had created in our minds, and which produced in them a foregone conclusion incompatible with the acceptance of some particular truth; it may again sometimes be an accidental predisposition towards certain ideas which had previously escaped our notice simply for lack of attention. Thus a man's opinions, tastes, and pursuits, vary as a rule at different periods of his life; he is led astray at one time by enthusiasm or passion, which the experience of maturity will correct; his political opinions change, not merely with changes of circumstances, but as the result of prolonged consideration of the principles on which they rest; the amusements and hobbies which at one time of life he finds most fascinating, are frequently those which at another he

would have thought to be nothing less than repulsive.

The effect of faith upon the intelligence is no doubt more or less like the effect upon it of such causes as these; it is an arrangement or re-arrangement of mental furniture leading to a definite and fixed result.

It is evident that, from the nature of the case, no independent proof can be given of the supernatural character of faith, or even of its existence in the form which the Christian religion ascribes to it. For those who accept the Christian revelation, the chief evidence of the existence of faith as a supernatural virtue lies in the fact that it is included in that revelation; for others, the only available evidence is indirect, and lies in the necessity already indicated of finding something to account for the different views of revealed religion taken by persons who are to all appearance equally endowed with the faculties necessary for the estimation of evidence and the perception of truth. It may, however, be urged that, granted the existence of God, and the fact of His having given a revelation to mankind, there is much *a priori* reasonableness in the idea that, together with the revelation, He should have provided means for its acceptance and due appreciation,

Proof impossible from the nature of the case.

such as the conditions under which assent is given to the reality of past events do not, of themselves, afford. If a historical revelation is to be believed in with a certainty greater in kind and degree than any certainty we can have as to ordinary history (and it would obviously be worthless as a revelation if it were not so believed in) this can only be done by some means which is correlative, so to speak, to the revelation itself, but which is not available for application to any other object.

So much for the gift, or power of faith. We have now to consider the act of faith which is its proper result. This consists in the acceptance of the truth of revelation, not on the ground of its intrinsic probability or even certainty, but because of the authority of the person who gives the revelation—*i.e.*, of God. The *objectum formale* (formal object, or motive) of faith is *Deus revelans* (God, as revealing truth). In other words, the immediate and primary object of faith is not any particular set of doctrines, but the fact that God has spoken, and that He has spoken truly. It is thus quite possible that a person may be ignorant of some of the doctrines of the Christian religion, and yet have complete faith—he believes all that God has revealed “implicitly” though not “explicitly.”

Object of
Faith.

On the other hand, it is equally possible to accept each separate doctrine of the whole Catholic faith on its merits, as being intrinsically true, without any faith whatever; since to believe a thing merely on natural evidence is not faith but opinion—possibly opinion of such high probability as to amount to practical certainty, but still essentially falling short of the formal certainty which belongs to faith just as it belongs to that absolute knowledge which we have of our own experience and of necessary, or self-evident, truth.

It is evident that faith has, properly speaking, nothing to do with trust or confidence in God's personal favour to oneself; to believe in a revelation made to the world is one thing; to believe in one's own salvation is obviously quite another. Faith is the "hand which receives," not a personal gift, but a body of revealed truth; the two are incommensurate with one another, and evidently cannot be appropriated by the same act. However necessary faith may be for salvation, it is necessary as a condition, and not as being identical with the reception of saving grace.

Further, it is to be noticed that the natural and proper consequence of faith is right action, or obedience to the declared will of God; and

Its natural
consequence
right action.

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faith is only said to be “formal,” or complete, when it has this consequence. But through human perversity, faith may also be *informis* or incomplete, in an unnatural divorce from its legitimate consequences. To “know the right” is one thing: but to “practise what we know” is something more. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor* is not a reasonable attitude to take up: but it is a very real, and a very human one.

Faith is
meritorious,

It is nevertheless true that the act of faith is, and must be, *ceteris paribus*, a meritorious one, since it takes place through the free action of the will: though such merit as it has may be more than neutralised by subsequent perversity. It is always possible to shut one's eyes to the light—to have the truth before one, but to refuse to take notice of it; the reason for such refusal is probably often (though certainly not always) that those who are too consistent to believe and refuse to practise, feel that they must refuse to believe since they are determined not to practise. So far as it goes, therefore, and until it has been neutralised by subsequent inconsistency, the act of faith, as a voluntary homage to truth, is a praiseworthy one, and its refusal is to be condemned.

because
voluntary.

That the act of faith is a voluntary one—

i.e., that we are free to perform it or to withhold it—follows from the close connection which exists between the will and the intellect. Much might be said on this subject, and it will be noticed in a later chapter. It will be sufficient here to point out that a certain degree of attention is necessary for the estimation of any evidence; and such attention consists mainly in the deliberate envisaging of the subject, apart from preconceived ideas, and from distracting considerations and interruptions. We are all familiar with the effort, often involving a considerable strain, which is necessary in order to concentrate the mind upon an abstruse subject; and there can be no doubt that if anything is voluntary, an effort of this kind is so; we are free to make it, or to abstain from making it, if we are free at all. Now the illumination of the intellect by faith, by no means obviates the necessity of concentrated attention to the evidence for revealed religion; what it does is to help the person who makes the effort to reach the true conclusion. To fix the attention impartially on the subject is, in the language of theology, to correspond with grace, which we are free to do or not to do; and the merit of the act lies in the sincere desire for truth to which it bears witness.

Method of
operation
always
essentially
the same.

It must not be supposed that this account of the matter is applicable only to those who come to the consideration of religion in some uncertainty as to its truth. A Catholic child, or a man who has never known a doubt, no less than a sincere unbeliever who is willing to be convinced, makes an intellectual effort, and contemplates certain evidences, whenever he makes an act of faith. The intellectual effort is not in all cases of equal intensity, nor are the evidences in every case the same; but both are there. A child who recites the act of faith which Catholic children are taught, declares his belief in the main doctrines of his religion "because God has revealed them by the Church"; a statement which may at once be seen to involve the whole of the mental process just described.

The act of faith, then, is a voluntary and therefore meritorious act; it is performed by the intellect, under the direction of the will, and by the aid of the supernatural illumination which the gift of faith conveys; its object is the authority of God revealing truth, together with the truth so revealed; and it depends upon evidence (called by theologians *motivum credibilitatis*), the full value of which is made known by the divine illumination, giving to the

intellectual operation a conscious certainty which it otherwise could not have.

As has already been observed, the nature of the case does not admit of any direct evidence of the supernatural character attributed to faith by the Christian religion, apart from the evidence for the Christian religion as a whole, of which this attribution is an important feature. The only way of accounting for facts.

But there can be no question as to the existence of faith as a concrete fact. No principle of human life and action, by which individuals are distinguished from their fellows in respect of character and conduct, is more familiar than that by which some are so penetrated with the idea of religion, as to consider it the sole worthy object of their interest, while to others it appears a matter of little importance. The Christian theory of faith is the only means of accounting for this distinction at present attainable: to explain it as a matter of temperament is merely to state the problem in other words, so long as the cause of that religious temperament, which is so markedly present in some individuals and markedly absent in others, remains undiscovered. The Christian theory alone accounts for the facts.

CHAPTER VIII

NECESSARY INFERENCES

Recapitu-
lation.

WE have now considered, in outline, the whole scheme of the argument on which the certainty of the Christian religion rests. Beginning with the existence of God, we have seen that to believe in it is a practical necessity for reasoning humanity, and that this belief depends upon considerations the weight of which cannot be impaired by any conceivable scientific or philosophical discovery. We have seen that the same thing may be said of the existence of the human soul; and from these two ideas we have seen that some system of religion and morals must necessarily result. Going on to the consideration of revealed religion, we have found that the evidence in favour of its genuineness is abundant; while against it nothing can be brought that rightly deserves to be called evidence. Finally, we have accounted for the peculiar assurance that Christians enjoy of the certainty of their religious belief by the gift of faith, the existence of which as a working principle

is not open to question, and the nature and origin of which are the subject of one of the revealed doctrines of Christianity.

If these points are established, it follows that there is no need to consider separately any others of the doctrines so revealed; because, as we have seen, a revelation is of the nature of information upon subjects with regard to which we have no data and of which we therefore can know nothing apart from revelation. The specifically Christian doctrines, that is to say, must be accepted on authority, if accepted at all, and cannot reasonably be believed in any other way. It is possible that some of them may strike an enquirer as intrinsically probable, and others as improbable; it is equally possible that to some minds, all alike may wear an aspect of *a priori* improbability. But neither view has properly anything to say as to the truth of the doctrines in question, since there obviously can be nothing within the sphere of human experience which can enable us to form a legitimate opinion upon matters which lie entirely beyond that sphere. The question is simply as to the authority upon which those doctrines claim our belief; and this authority we have already seen to be unimpeachable.

There are, however, certain doctrines which relate to matters of human experience, and which, Inferences from revealed truth.

Subject matter of revelation does not need, or admit of, proof.

though not part of revelation, are of the nature of necessary inferences from it ; and if reason and experience led us to reject those inferences, there would be serious difficulty, to say the least, in accepting the doctrines from which they are drawn. It must, however, be observed that this difficulty would be insuperable only if reason led us to absolute certainty. A mere opinion of the improbability of the inferences from revealed truth now in question would hardly furnish a logical justification for the rejection of the doctrines on which they depend. For it is evident that an opinion which holds a certain theory to be improbable, must nevertheless allow the possibility, though not the probability, that it may be true ; and when sufficient evidence is forthcoming, the adverse opinion gives place readily to a favourable certainty. Thus a religion which led necessarily to the conclusion that two straight lines can enclose a space would find our intuitive conviction to the contrary a fatal obstacle to its acceptance by us : we could not accept such a religion without destroying the very foundations of our reason, and so relinquishing our power to judge of truth and falsehood in any sphere whatever. But when revealed religion obliges us to believe that we are possessed of freewill, that the evil of the world is not inconsistent with the perfect goodness and

omnipotence of its Creator, or that God occasionally deals with men and things in ways which are out of the ordinary course of nature ; then, though we might have had a strong antecedent opinion of the improbability of these propositions, we nevertheless have no certainty which we can oppose to the certainty of revelation. The authority of revelation is, in such a case, the additional evidence which determines our final conviction in a sense contrary to the opinion which we should have held in the absence of such evidence.

All therefore that has to be shown with regard to the subjects we have now to deal with is that the conviction regarding each of them which the Christian religion requires us to hold is in itself a possible one ; though we might perhaps fairly expect to find, as in point of fact I think we shall, that it is in itself far more probable than any other.

Must be shown to be possible.

CHAPTER IX

FREE WILL

ONE of the faculties with which mankind naturally believe themselves to be endowed is that of the Will; and this they have as a rule believed to be free, that is, exempt from the ordinary law of causation, by which every phenomenon must be the result of a cause outside itself. The movements of the will are believed to be caused by the will itself, and to be in a great degree independent of all circumstances.

Idea of
causality due
to conscious-
ness of Free
Will.

It is from this sense of his own independence as a cause that man has arrived at the idea of causality: since the fact of causation is not discoverable in the sensible and external world: there all that our senses can tell us of is invariable sequence; the causal relation with which we inevitably invest such sequences is the product of the mind, which is familiar with the idea of will as a cause, but can have no direct experience of causation in any other way.

It is from the same internal experience that man has been able to attribute to God that supreme and unconditioned will, without which our conception of God as a personal being must break down altogether.

Also idea of
supreme will
of God.

It is also generally supposed that to the sense of freedom are to be attributed the universal conception of moral responsibility; and the equally universal idea which follows from it of the essential moral quality of human actions: since man cannot reasonably be held answerable for what he cannot help, nor can any moral quality be ascribed to actions which are the necessary results of circumstances.

Also that
of moral
responsibility
and the
morality of
actions.

Now there are three difficulties in the way of the acceptance by thinking persons of this general theory of the will. The first arises from the theory which denies to man an immaterial soul; for since the will is *ex hypothesi* a faculty of the soul, it is obvious that, on the theory that the functions generally called psychical are really only a subdivision of those of the human body, man can have no will at all, and by consequence, no free will. What on this theory is called will is really no more than a development of the physical appetites, to which the idea of freedom is simply inapplicable.

Three
difficulties.

1. No im-
material soul,
therefore no
will as dis-
tinct from
appetite.

The second lies in the fact—which is hardly

2. Will is governed by motives.

open to question—that the actions of the will are governed by motives. To will an action without a reason, or motive, for doing so is not merely impossible, but inconceivable. But, it is asked, if the will is governed by its motives, what becomes of its freedom? It merely obeys the motives that occur to it; or, when several motives occur at once, it obeys the strongest of them. Thus, even granting that man has a will, it cannot be a free will.

3. Pre-destination.

The third difficulty is not philosophical or scientific, but theological; it has however been made use of, as an *argumentum ad hominem*, in the supposed interests of science and philosophy, as well as by those who have had a theological position to defend. Since God, it is said, is the supreme cause, and since all earthly events and actions take place under His guidance, and according to a fixed scheme, man cannot be an independent cause, but must act as he is moved to act by the divine will, which shapes his career for its own ends. Man's birth and death, with all the actions which lie between them, must be predestinated or predetermined, and there is no room for human free will.

Answers.

The first of these difficulties has been already answered in Chapter IV., where we saw that there are incontrovertible reasons for

the belief that man possesses an immaterial and individual soul. One of those reasons, it will be remembered, was the existence in all human beings of the power of forming universal ideas, by means of particular sensible experiences, but wholly distinct from them. It is in the sphere of these ideas that the will acts; and it is thus distinguished from involuntary appetite, which is obviously concerned with particular objects of sensation: whereas to will is to resolve upon an action, which has not yet been performed, and which therefore exists only in the mind as a highly complicated abstract idea. We are hungry or thirsty involuntarily; we have no control over our physical appetites: they act whether we desire them to do so or not. But to will the satisfaction of our appetites, or to will the refusal of it, is a different thing altogether; and if will were merely a development of sensation, it could hardly present the appearance of sharp distinction from it that it does. At any rate, there is no proof whatever that will is merely such a development, though the assumption has often been made by materialists that it is so; and in the absence of proof to the contrary, we cannot but believe that the distinction which is plainly apparent to our experience is a real one.

1. Evidence for existence of soul already given.

Will is clearly distinguished from appetite.

2. Motives
are partly of
our own
making,

As to the second difficulty, it is undoubtedly the case that the action of the will depends on motives. But the question is, what constitutes a motive? We know that what to one person is a motive for action is to another a deterrent: and hence it appears that we in some measure make our own motives—*i.e.*, we invest the various possible objects of will that occur to us with the character of motives, or the reverse. It is therefore in the constitution of our motives that the freedom of which we are conscious must be found. This appears very clearly in what is called deliberation, or the weighing of possible courses of action against one another, which is an intellectual process, performed under the guidance of the will, and resulting in a verdict as to the relative desirableness of the different courses proposed; the one which is finally preferred being, of course, the motive which prevails. Now it is certain that we may give the attention necessary for deliberation, or withhold it, at our choice: the deliberation may be thorough or hasty; or we may exclude certain courses of action from consideration, while giving it to others. The state of mind is by no means unknown, in which thorough deliberation is given to all possible courses but one, that one being excluded for

by inter-
action of
intellect
and will.

the very reason that it would be chosen if it were duly considered. A drunkard, for example, deliberates as to whether he will take whisky or beer: but he refuses to consider the alternative of taking neither, because he knows that to be the course that his reason would force upon him if he were to consider it fairly. The will and the intelligence thus act together; the former acting on the simple cognition by the intellect (*intellectus possibilis*, or the intellect in its merely receptive function), and then directing, so to speak, the further consideration of the subject or subjects by the intellect in its active or qualifying capacity (*intellectus agens*).¹ It must, however, be remembered that the faculties of will, intellect, and memory are not independent powers, but are functions of the individual soul; and though it is convenient to speak of them as separate, it is really the living human being in every case who is free to will, who thinks and who remembers.

The third difficulty is a difficulty only when

3. *In aternitate omnia simul.*

¹ Freedom thus lies in the power of the will to compel or to abstain from compelling the intellect to give full consideration to the objects before it; it acts, so to speak, automatically on the final report of the intellect. If this report is not in accordance with truth, after such full consideration, the resulting action of the will is mistaken, but not morally blameworthy; the case is one of "invincible ignorance."

it is not realised that the same considerations are not always applicable to the infinite being as to finite ones, or to eternity as to time. For if it is remembered that there is no past, present, or future in eternity, and that consequently God not merely foresees future events, but knows them as if they had actually happened, the difficulty disappears. *In aternitate omnia simul*; there is no difficulty therefore in conceiving that the course of the world can be directed in every particular by divine wisdom and power, and the free play of the human will allowed for at the same time; provided that the actions of the human will are known as certainly as they would be were they strictly necessitated by divine predestination; which is actually the case.

Much might be added by way of argument and illustration, but what has now been said seems sufficiently to show that there is the strongest possible ground for believing, apart from the decision of the Church on the subject, that the general consciousness of mankind is right in its idea of man's natural and necessary freedom.

CHAPTER X

EVIL

THE second of the inferences from revealed truth which we must briefly consider is the proposition that the existence of evil in the world is consistent with the existence of a Creator who is Himself perfectly good and absolutely omnipotent.

It cannot be denied that there is, at first sight, very considerable difficulty in accepting this statement—a difficulty which is probably more insistent and more widely felt than any other which tends to obstruct the acceptance of the Christian religion. Other such difficulties are mainly of a speculative character, and exercise their influence only in the sphere of abstract thought; they are lost sight of, for the most part, in the active pursuits and practical details of everyday life, which claim the largest share of our time and attention. But the problem of evil is presented to us in its full force only by actual experience; it is in abstract speculation that we

lose sight, more or less, of its most impressive features, while the daily discomforts of life, its constant anxieties, and the atmosphere of tragedy and of pathos in which it is involved bring incessantly before us the questions by which the faith of many have been undermined—namely, if God is omnipotent, why has He permitted evil to exist; and if He is good, how can He endure its presence in the world He has made and governs?

Two ques-
tions.

Answer must
be under two
conditions.

It is only reasonable that some kind of answer to these questions should be required; but it must be understood that there are two conditions under which the answer must be given. The first is that it is necessarily of the nature of a hypothesis, since it is evident that no direct proof can be given of a theory which deals with matters antecedent to all our experience. The strength of such a hypothesis will necessarily lie first in its consistency with itself, and secondly in its adequacy to the facts to be explained; we have no means of verifying it by actual experience. This, however, is equally true of any possible non-theistic explanation of the problem. The question how the forces of nature can be, as apparently they are, perpetually thwarting and contradicting themselves is certainly not less obscure than that which asks how God can

cause or permit that which is contrary to Himself, as evil is; and we are no better furnished with the data necessary for an answer in the former case than in the latter. Indeed, the theist is in one respect better provided than his antagonist; his conception of God as a moral and intelligent ruler of the world does give him a basis for any theory he may construct, which is not to be found in a view of the matter in which evil has to be accounted for by physical causes alone. The nature which is perpetually at war with herself, which implants cravings in human beings which she refuses to satisfy, which simultaneously discloses truth and causes monstrous delusions, and under whose government the fittest survive at one time, and at another the unfittest (as we are told is the case)—such a nature is certainly less comprehensible than a God for whose most surprising actions some moral and intelligible reason may be assigned.

The second condition is that the answer must necessarily be incomplete—*i.e.*, though it must be adequate to the facts in order to be tenable even as a mere hypothesis, there must be behind it a region of unfathomable mystery. Though we may perceive, more or less clearly, what the motive and purpose of creation may have been, we must in our present state be ignorant why such motive

and purpose should ever have existed; just as, supposing *per impossibile* that evil could be explained in a naturalistic sense, it must still be impossible to assign any cause for the existence of the (supposedly eternal and infinite) matter or substance in which the processes of nature take place. We cannot by any effort of reason or imagination bring before our minds the conditions under which an infinite and immaterial being willed to create a material universe, any more than we can imagine how or why a material infinite and eternal universe should have come to exist of itself.

Under these two conditions, however, a solution of the problem may be found by means of the following considerations.

"*Malum
naturæ.*"

By evil is to be understood some forcible hindrance of the natural action or development of any natural object, or some disturbance of its constitution. The various parts of creation mutually limit one another; by their action upon one another they bring about the decay and disintegration which supply material for new developments of sensible existence; every form of terrestrial being owes its decay and final destruction, as well as its existence and continuance, to the action upon it of its environment. This is universally true, of a human being no more

and no less than of the geological strata which underlie his abode.

Evil of this kind (*malum naturæ*, natural evil) is obviously not evil in the common meaning of the term. But it is equally obvious that the essential principle of evil is embodied in the universal law of mutual limitation and interaction: and that in this sense evil is one of the constituent principles—the fundamental principle, in fact—of the world which we know. If, however, evil went no farther than this, there would be no difficulty in reconciling it with the divine goodness and omnipotence; the difficulty arises when we begin to consider the two forms of evil to which the term is generally confined.

These two are sin, or moral evil; and suffering which is both physical and mental. How can God, who *ex hypothesi* is perfectly good, tolerate the existence of the moral evil which He abhors, or the suffering which abounds in the world, and which it cannot be less displeasing to Him to contemplate than it is to an ordinarily humane man? And since these things must necessarily be displeasing to God, why does He cause or permit them (causation and permission in the case of an omnipotent creator being practically the same thing) if He is able to prevent them, as we must believe Him to be?

Moral and
physical evil.

The first question is strictly a philosophical one. We want to know how it is possible that God and evil should exist together; since they are the exact contraries of one another, and, it would seem, can no more co-exist than light and darkness can. For evil, it is evident, is not a positive thing, but a negation; as darkness is merely the absence of light, so evil is the absence of good; and by good is to be understood free unfettered and unhindered existence of every kind. But God is the absolute being and source of all existence; how then can He be the cause, direct or indirect, of that which is most opposite to being—that is, to Himself?

The answer is to be found in the consideration of the natural or merely formal evil which we have seen to be a condition of the existence of the world as we know it. From the mutual opposition and limitation of the various forms of existence there results a harmony—a unity in variety; and it is because of its evident adaptation to this end that natural evil is not ordinarily reckoned an evil at all. Now if it appears that the order and harmony of the world is not disturbed by the introduction of moral evil, then, in regard to the whole, moral evil will have its justification as subserving the final result; and in that point of view will lose the offensive-

The universal order is not disturbed by these,

ness which belongs to it when viewed in itself and apart from its final purpose. If evil does not disturb the general harmony, but assists in its production, then it is seen to be merely a mode of the relations of things to one another, and is not contrary to, but a part of that ordered system of creation of which we believe God to be the author.

But moral evil is the result of the exercise of human free will; of free will, that is to say, exercised in opposition to the laws laid down by God for man's welfare. This, if it stood alone, could be nothing else than a disturbance of the order established in the world, and could only produce confusion. But, in point of fact, it does not stand alone: it is closely related to the third kind of evil, namely, suffering—mental and physical, temporal and eternal: and it is precisely because suffering is the inevitable consequence of a breach of the divine laws that such breach can take place without disturbing the order and harmony which constitute the perfection of creation. Suffering, so to speak, restores the equilibrium which sin disturbs; as happiness is the result of conformity to the law of God, so suffering is the result of opposition to that law: the balance is perfect either way.

because sin
is counter-
poised by
suffering.

God then may be supposed to have indirectly

caused evil, by endowing man with free will, without thereby allowing the perfection of His creation to be marred; because that perfection lies in the orderly and harmonious relation of the elements which make up the created universe; which order and harmony are just as manifest in the necessary connection between sin and suffering as in that between virtue and happiness.

This brings us to our second question, which is a moral one—why, if God is good, does He allow suffering which He is able to prevent? In a man, such a proceeding would be unjustifiable: can it be less so in God?

Suffering
may rightly
be caused for
a sufficient
reason.

It is in this question that the most pressing part of the difficulty really lies; and the solution is twofold. First, it must be observed that, according to the notions of human morality (which are all we have to go by), the permission, or even the causation of suffering, is perfectly justifiable, provided that a good and adequate purpose is served by it. A dentist who extracts an aching tooth is his patient's benefactor, in spite of the pain he inflicts: a minister who makes war in the cause of justice performs a virtuous act, in spite of the individual suffering he causes. In like manner, if the purpose of creation as a whole, which we have seen is subserved by the evil involved in

it, is sufficiently good in itself, then God's action in permitting the evil will be fully justified.

But what is God's purpose in creation? Certainly, whatever subordinate purpose it may have, it is for His own pleasure. It may be that the goodness of creation lies in a certain likeness to the threefold unity of the Creator, resulting from the unity in variety embodied in creation as a whole: but however this may be, it is certain that God made the world to please Himself, if He made it, or if He exists, at all.

But to please God is the highest and most perfect motive that anyone can have—God Himself, no less than His creatures: for God's will or pleasure is the absolute law and the comprehensive final cause of all that is; to do right and to please God are convertible phrases; God does right in pleasing Himself. No end or motive can be compared with this in point of magnitude or perfection; since the divine will and pleasure are the constituent principle of all justice and goodness. If, therefore, the suffering of the human race tends in ever so small a degree to the divine honour and pleasure, it is abundantly justified.

The pleasure of God is such a reason.

Here, however, we pass to the second part of our solution. For this question at once confronts us. Granted that if creation is pleasing to God, all that it may involve or include is right;

still, how can we suppose that God's pleasure in His work is not hopelessly vitiated by the contemplation of the sufferings of the creatures whom He loves, as we may suppose a good man's pleasure would be destroyed in like circumstances? And if that is so, why did God not rather abstain from creating than create a world which was to be so full of suffering as this is?

We cannot
fully perceive
the equation
between
sin and
suffering.

We have already seen part of the answer to this difficulty. God's pleasure in His creation comes, we are bound to suppose, not from contemplating its parts out of relation with the surroundings which give them their real character, but from the perfect order and harmony which He contemplates in the whole—as the beauty of a building lies not in any single brick, but in the combination of a vast number of bricks according to a beautiful design. But suffering only enters into this harmony of creation in virtue of its being the counterpoise of sin, and the perfection of the relation between the two lies in the exact adequacy of the counterpoise. We, however, are certainly not able to perceive this adequacy: suffering, being matter of experience, appeals to our present faculties much more forcibly than the transcendental and mainly intellectual conception of sin can appeal to them: we perceive, so to speak, the depth of the

shadow, but not the density of the body that casts it. But we can conceive that to the infinite mind there may appear to be an exact equation between all sin and all suffering such as is impossible of realisation to us in our present state: and it is worthy of remark that again and again in the history of the human race, the utmost extremity of suffering has appeared to individuals more tolerable than sin, in spite of the necessary limitation of their view of the latter, as compared with their sensitiveness to the former.

But further; let us imagine that God had abstained from creating this world because of the suffering that He foresaw arising from the action of human free will. God would then have submitted His will, which was to create this world, to the will of man, which was to incur suffering. But by so doing He would have ceased to be God: since supremacy is essential to the divine nature. God could no more submit to any creature, actual or possible, and still be God, than the centre of a circle can be moved to the circumference, and still be the centre. In other words, if God had abstained from creating because of what man would do, He would have destroyed Himself—which is not merely impossible, but simply unthinkable.

God cannot suspend His action upon the will of creatures.

This is a rational and coherent account of the

nature of evil, and the reason for its existence ; and it is the only one of which so much can be said.

Objection :
the Divine
goodness
and justice
are not
adequately
represented
in this
account.

It may be objected, however, that it leaves us with a very inadequate idea of the divine goodness ; that in fact it represents God as being indifferent to individual suffering and wrong-doing, so long as the due order and harmony of things is preserved.

It may further be said that this account of the matter leaves something to be desired in respect of the divine justice. For it is not only the guilty that suffer for the counterbalancing of their wrongful disturbance of the harmony of creation : a vast number of individuals suffer acutely, who neither have nor can have been guilty of any actual wrong-doing ; “the sins of the fathers are visited on the children.”

Answer.

Each of these difficulties, then, must be shortly considered. First, is God indifferent to individual suffering or to the evil essentially involved in sinful actions ? It might indeed be supposed that He is, if we had only natural religion for our guidance in the matter. It might with some show of reason be argued (as it has been) that the God who unquestionably exists, and to whose action the state of this world must ultimately be attributed, is content to sit “above the thunder,” and concerns Himself but little with human affairs. But such a conception is obviously quite inconsis-

tent with Christianity, which represents God as being so moved by the spectacle of human misery as to take part in it Himself, and suffering the utmost extremity of mental and bodily anguish in order to restore, to some extent at least, the ideal condition which mankind had failed to maintain.¹ The essential idea of the atonement is that by it sin and suffering, in themselves alien from the divine ideal of creation, should become a bond of sympathy and reconciliation between mankind and its Creator, and so be transfigured—at least for the penitent and obedient soul—into some likeness of the perfect happiness, the desire for which is so deeply implanted in the human mind. It is thus that the otherwise inexplicable eagerness for suffering of every kind manifested by so many saints is to be explained. The fact that a superficially somewhat similar desire for self-immolation exists among religionists who are not Christians at all, would seem to show further

The Atonement of Christ.

¹ It is of course inconceivable that the Divine nature should suffer pain, even indirectly and by way of sympathy with suffering humanity. But the human quality of sympathy appears in the Divine nature apart from the condition of suffering, as the "mercy" of God; and it is to this Divine attribute that the Incarnation is to be ascribed, as what may be rightly considered an expedient for enabling the Divine nature to participate, both by sympathy and by actual suffering, in the sufferings of mankind.

that the divine "plan of redemption" is no after-thought or reversal of the created order, but is, as it might have been expected to be, rooted deeply in the nature of things.

Unity of
mankind.

Then as to the suffering of the innocent; it must first be observed that it would probably be difficult to establish a case of innocence so absolute and complete as to be entitled to exemption from the common lot. But granting that, at least, suffering is not in every case proportionate to the deserts of the sufferer (which is all that the argument requires), whether the proportion is by way of excess or of defect, it may be said that the human race has a certain evident solidarity, according to the law of its existence, by which the mere fact of our common humanity forces us to share in some degree in the sorrows and joys of our neighbours; so that the unearned and otherwise unattainable pleasures which flow to us from our neighbours may probably counterbalance the pains that come to us in the same way. But in any case, man is essentially *πολίτικον ζῶον*, a social being: and this being so, the individual must share the fortunes of the race by the very law of his nature. That these fortunes are partly evil is a consequence of man's misuse of his freedom; that the evil is not confined to the evil-doers is the result of that

solidarity which is inseparable from the idea of humanity.

That God is not indifferent to the essentially evil character of sinful actions is plainly enough shown by His having annexed to them the counterpoise of suffering; and by His taking upon Himself the "likeness of sinful flesh" for its regeneration, He has demonstrated His sympathy with mankind under its moral burden no less than under the suffering which that burden entails.

If it be asked whether God could not have created a world in which the penitential consequences of sin should fall exclusively on the guilty, or one in which no misuse of freewill should be possible, the answer is certainly that He could. Such a world, however, would not be this world, but a different one altogether. And that God should have so submitted His will to the will of His creature, we have already seen to be inconceivable.

If, finally, it be asked why God should ever have conceived the intention of creating such a world as this, there is no answer. We have reached the region of impenetrable mystery which surrounds all our knowledge and experience. We know enough to vindicate the justice of God, but no more.

It is well worthy of remark, however, that

God not indifferent to moral evil.

God could have created a different world from this.

Final mystery of creation.

Suggestion
of good in
evil.

while the explanation of the problem we have been considering is an adequate logical solution of its difficulties, there must certainly be a great deal in it which our faculties are unable to apprehend. "A man's reach must exceed his grasp:" these are hints and glimpses, half-tones and broken reflections which all men are at times conscious of, and which elude full observation and analysis, but which seem to suggest that there is in the evil of the world some untraceable correspondence with an all-pervading law or principle of good. Such a principle we dimly perceive in the nobility of character which suffering and the struggle with wrong bring out and in part create, and which we cannot conceive of as existing in a world where an unbroken monotony of good should prevail; in the pathetic grace and charm which would, so far as can be seen, be missing from life if its darker aspects were unknown; or in the natural sympathy with one another which could hardly have place among mankind apart from its common inheritance of sorrow. This consideration, though it adds little or nothing to the logical force of our explanation, is yet evidently in harmony with it, and thus gives it a moral weight and recommendation which a mere logical argument must inevitably lack.

CHAPTER XI

MIRACLES AND MYSTICISM

MIRACLES may be defined as departures from the ordinary course of nature, which cannot be accounted for by any known principle other than the exercise of divine power, upon which all phenomena ultimately depend.

1. Miracles.
Definition.

It is common to oppose miracles to laws of nature; but the phrase is a misleading one. We really, as Professor Huxley has pointed out, know nothing of laws, in the ordinary sense, as applied to the process of nature. All we know is that there are certain observed sequences of events which constitute the actual uniformity of nature: we have no right or reason to speak of these sequences as if they were the result of any necessity known to us apart from the sequences themselves.

Miracles
falsely op-
posed to
"laws of
nature."

For those who accept the theistic position, the rationale of the whole matter is this. The observed course of nature is due to the action of divine power, which having certain ends in

view, attains them in the most suitable way. So long, therefore, as the ends in view remain the same, the means adopted for their attainment will not vary: and a slight or infinitesimal variation in the ends will bring about a precisely corresponding variation in the means. But the ends to be secured by the course of nature are always the same; or if they vary, do so by an infinitesimal gradation. The sensible world consequently presents, so far as the general experience of mankind goes, the appearance of strict regulation. But if it be admitted that from time to time an object may be present in the divine mind, which is not included among those which the ordinary course of nature is intended to attain, there will evidently occur a departure from those natural sequences which to us have the appearance of being the result of unbreakable law.

Object of
miracles.

Now the object of miracles lies precisely in their exceptional character, by which the existence of the divine power behind the so-called laws of nature is made evident. If miracles were of frequent or regular occurrence, they would no longer be evidence of the existence of a supreme divine will in free action, but would themselves wear the appearance of law; whatever feature they might all have in

common would inevitably put on the appearance of the cause to which the various effects were due, according to the operation of a supposed law: as in fact it has been attempted to explain the cures effected at Lourdes by the regular action of nervous stimulation caused by local sentiment.

Miracles, therefore, are by their very nature relatively infrequent and irregular in their occurrence: and to those at least who admit their possibility on the principles just stated, their reality in any given instance is merely a question of evidence.

Here we are met by the argument of Hume, ^{Rarity of miracles.} which in form has the appearance of a *petitio principii*, but when logically stated, amounts to this—that the rarity of miracles is such that in any given case the probability of the witnesses being mistaken or consciously untruthful is so much greater than that of the miracle having actually taken place as to make the occurrence of a miracle universally incredible.

It may be replied, in the first place, that miracles, or what are reputed to be such, are in point of fact by no means so rare as this; on the contrary, there has been a uniform tradition of occasional miraculous events,

occurring side by side with the regular working of natural causes, among mankind from the beginning of history until now; and it could probably be shown, if statistics were forthcoming, that the growing conception of regularity and order in nature has tended but little, if at all, to diminish the supposed frequency of miraculous exceptions to it.

The present writer, whose experience has no claim to be regarded as exceptional, has the good fortune to be acquainted with five persons who profess to have witnessed miracles, three of whom have also been the subjects of them. In those three cases the occurrence of the physical event to which a miraculous cause is assigned is absolutely unquestionable; the only question can be about the cause; and with regard to that, the witnesses' general character for veracity, and the precision of their statements leave nothing to be desired. Now, the proportion which five miracles bear to the number of ordinary events observed, or known on the testimony of others, in a lifetime is no doubt infinitesimally small. But having regard to the professed character of miracles, I submit that any much larger number coming within the purview of a single individual would

become suspect by reason of their very frequency.

Secondly, if it is admitted that miracles are possible (as those who accept the arguments contained in the preceding chapters must admit them to be), the probability of the witness to any miracle being consciously or unconsciously false becomes quite indefinitely less than Hume assumes it to be. The probability of error is only such as belongs to testimony of the occurrence of any event which is not a matter of ordinary experience, but which is in itself quite possible, and under special circumstances even likely to occur.

Miracles must, of course, be distinguished from divine favours—such as answers to prayer, or the entire or partial recovery from illness, which frequently follows the sacrament of extreme unction—which do not necessarily imply any deviation from the ordinary course of nature. The degree of credence to be given to the miraculous character of any event, for which claims to be a miracle in the true sense are set up, must vary, according to the kind and amount of evidence in its favour. Thus the certainty of faith belongs to the Gospel miracles, for which the authority of the Church is pledged: there is a large number of others which rest on evidence which would be sufficient

Their
probability.

Degree of
credence to
be given to
particular
instances.

to establish the reality of any ordinary occurrence, and which may, therefore, be accepted with practical certainty : many others are simply doubtful for lack of conclusive evidence ; and in regard to these there is room for a considerable variety of opinion ; while as to many there is a legitimate doubt as to whether the events, even if sufficiently attested, have any of the features necessary to entitle them to the character of miracles.

Thus no Christian can refuse to believe in the Resurrection of Christ, or in His miraculous birth, since these are articles of faith, and, moreover, are essential parts of historical Christianity : those who profess to accept them merely as symbolical expressions of certain truths are not Christians in the legitimate sense, any more than a Mohammedan, who would probably be disposed to agree with them on this point, can rightly or intelligibly be called a Christian.

All miracles which the Church does not guarantee are simply matters of opinion ; and while in regard to some there is practically a universal consent among those who accept the Church's authority, there are in regard to others very great differences of opinion as to the actual facts, though there is none as to their abstract possibility. When Thackeray made Esmond

excuse his rejection of the Catholic religion by his inability to believe that St Francis Xavier sailed across the sea on his cloak, he really misrepresented quite ludicrously, though no doubt unintentionally, the attitude of the Catholic Church on the subject.

There is, in principle, a very close connection ^{2. Mysticism.} between the theory of miracles and that by which the very important and widespread phenomena of what is called mysticism are to be explained. Though mystical religion is not essentially of a miraculous character in the sense ordinarily attributed to the phrase, it depends no less than miracles on the exercise of divine power in ways apart from the observed order of nature; and its phenomena are to be explained by reference to the same divine power, acting according to methods untraceable by us, to which miracles are due.

By mysticism is meant a certain transc- ^{Definition.} dental or purely spiritual experience, by which the human soul is enabled to contemplate God in Himself, and apart from those sensible experiences by which His existence and nature are ordinarily made known. Mystical religion is thus the highest effort of which the soul is capable, and by it is denoted that direct intercourse of human beings with God, of the existence of

which no demonstration is possible, but to which a continuous succession of records of individual experience bears witness. Such experience in its highest and most perfect form is the peculiar gift of certain exceptional individuals; but it is in a measure, more or less, bestowed on all devout persons; indeed, it is hardly possible to imagine a sincerely religious life from which it should be altogether absent.

Not peculiar
to Chris-
tianity.

That mysticism, in the sense of contemplation of the absolute divine being, is not peculiar to Christianity, but has existed in all ages and among the followers of all religions, may be fully admitted; since it has no necessary connection with any particular religious system, but is the consequence of a supernatural assistance which depends on the will of God alone; and there is no difficulty in supposing that God has been pleased to reward faith and devotion in this way, even among the votaries of imperfect and partially false religions. It seems more than probable, however, that Christian mystics have attained to a much greater degree of divine knowledge than any others; and the mysticism of Christians is certainly to be broadly distinguished from that of other religions by the fact that in the Church it is in some degree attainable by all, no matter what their external circumstances may be, and has as

a fact been attained by many persons living an ordinary social life in the world: whereas outside the Church the heights of mystical contemplation have been scaled, if at all, only by some exceptional persons who have devoted themselves to a life of ascetic seclusion. In this, as in many other respects, it is the unique prerogative of the Church to have brought within the grasp of the masses of mankind great principles of thought and action which, but for its guidance, could have been made known at most to a select few.

It is also beyond question that an imprudent devotion to mystical ideas has been responsible for much error in belief and for not a little immorality in conduct. It is, however, clear that such results can only have come from a spurious source; since it is not possible that a genuine divine illumination can ever have led to conclusions contrary to reason, or to conduct subversive of the moral law; while, on the other hand, the almost innumerable contemplative Saints of the Catholic Church have been conspicuous rather for their unquestioning orthodoxy of belief, and the spotlessness of their moral character, than for any tendency to irregularity in thought or action. There is no need to insist on the principle so constantly brought under

Spurious mysticism has led to error and immorality.

our notice that the greater the excellence of a genuine article, the more abundant will be the worthless or harmful imitations of it.

**Mysticism a
matter of
experience.**

Mystical religion is, as has been said, a matter of personal experience, and consequently its higher forms can only be fully expounded by those who have experienced them. For such an exposition the reader is referred to the works of mystical writers, such as St John of the Cross, St Teresa, or Father Baker, with many others. But the broad principles on which mysticism rests are easy to be understood, and our account of the principles of the Christian religion would not be complete without some explanation of them.

**Experi-
mental, not
theoretical.**

The experimental knowledge of God is first to be distinguished from the theoretical certainty of His existence and nature: mystical theology deals with the former subject, as natural and revealed theology deal with the latter. By means of the one it is perceived that God is (*quia est*); by means of the other it is perceived, within certain necessary limits, what He is (*quid est*). The process in each is exactly the reverse of that in the other. In natural theology we proceed from sensible experience to infer the existence of God, and from the character of that experience we deduce necessarily and with

certainly some conclusions as to His nature. Revelation in like manner appeals to our reason, assisted (though not superseded) by the gift of faith, by placing before it an array of concrete facts, and indicating the conclusions to be drawn from them. But in mystical theology, the object **Method.** of which is to bring the human soul into the immediate presence of the divine nature, all concrete facts have to be set aside. Sensible impressions, with the "phantasms" of memory and the intellectual conceptions which result from them (*species intelligibiles*), are indeed the means through which the existence of God is known, by inference, to be a fact: but since God in His essence is no part of creation, but external to it as the universal cause, it follows that the very impressions which are necessary to our conviction of God's existence are hindrances to any possible perception of Him as He is in Himself, and apart from the material creation from which those impressions are derived. Creation is in short the veil under which the divine presence is concealed; and though it must indicate that presence indirectly, and as it were in outline, it is not until the veil is removed that the reality it covers can be directly perceived.

But since the mind naturally deals with **Unlike all other mental operations.** sensible impressions, and has no natural know-

ledge of anything which cannot be received through such impressions, it follows that the mystical contemplation of the divine nature must take place after a manner which has no direct likeness to any other kind of contemplation, thought, or perception ; and which consequently does not admit of description, since any description must be in terms of sensible experience, and must employ the sensible images which are the common medium of human intercourse. Such contemplation as we are considering must therefore be purely spiritual: the contact, so to speak, of the immaterial part of man with his immaterial Creator. Thus, in mystical contemplation or prayer, the mind is described as beholding the divine being in darkness : which darkness is again paradoxically called “an obscure light,” or a “luminous obscurity,” *supernaturalis divinæ caliginis radius*; the soul in it “beholding the invisible, and knowing the unknowable.”

Super-
natural.

It follows again that the mind can only so rise above the natural conditions under which it exists in this world by a special divine assistance ; since it obviously cannot by its own energy transcend the fundamental law of its own action. It is therefore not surprising that anti-religious writers should strongly deny the possibility of

any direct knowledge of God; such knowledge being admittedly impossible by any natural means, and the principles of such writers debarring them from the recognition of any means which are not merely natural. But the reality of these supernatural experiences is sufficiently evidenced by the long succession of credible witnesses who lay claim to them, and by the philosophical accuracy and consistency with which their conditions are defined. There is a curious foreshadowing of Hegelianism in the conception of the divine essence, or pure being, as abstracted from all qualities whatever; and the "luminous darkness" of mystical authors strongly suggests the Hegelian identification of pure being and not-being. It is probable, moreover, that few persons who have the habit of prayer are without personal experience of something closely akin to, if not entirely identical with, the "darkness of excess of light," which mystical authors try to describe.

To this head must be referred the visions and private revelations frequently recorded in the Bible, and in the lives of Saints. Such visions are described as being sometimes of the nature of external appearances, sometimes as seen by the imagination only; and revelations have been received by individuals in some cases by an inward voice repeating a form of words, in others by an

Private
revelations.

interior illumination so clear as to have the force of a direct communication.

Of these it need only be said that the possibility of their occurrence must be admitted by all who believe in the supreme power of God over all persons and things; while the possibility in any given case of hallucination by merely natural means must also be freely conceded. Affections of the visual organs are common enough, in which a distinct image is perceived of an object which has no external reality, and the phenomena of dreams supply countless instances of imaginations so vivid as to have almost the distinctness of external objects. We may suppose that God has from time to time chosen to communicate with individuals through these obscure and generally latent physical capabilities: or that He has produced the effects in some other way unknown to, and possibly inconceivable by, us. But when the communication made to an individual harmonises, as regards faith and morals, with the revelation made to mankind in general, there is at least a strong *primâ facie* ground for regarding the supposed supernatural communication as genuine. Further than this the authority of the Church has never gone in this matter; a broad distinction has always been observed between revelations—however apparently trustworthy—

made to individuals, and that public revelation which has been given to the Church at large, and through the Church to the world in general. No private revelation is, or can be, of faith *per se*; nor is any such revelation used as evidence for the support of any Christian doctrine: though it is evident that those visions and revelations which are recorded in Scripture must share in the general guarantee of the authenticity of the Scripture record.

Catholic mysticism is thus sharply distinguished from Theosophy, as well as from such degenerations as Quietism or Quakerism, as being practical, and not speculative. It is the highest experience of the soul while living in this world; but it does not furnish a principle from which the nature of things may be deduced; its philosophical affinity is with the inductive method of the Aristotelian and scholastic system, not with the deductive transcendentalism of Spinoza, of Schelling, or of Hegel, or the doctrinal aberrations of such visionaries as Eckhardt or Jacob Boehme. Such abnormal experiences as those of St Hildegarde, St Catherine of Siena, or Margaret Mary Alacoque do not suggest any new theological or philosophical principles, but merely confirm and emphasise certain already known aspects of the relation between God and the individual soul.

Distinction
between
Catholic
mysticism
and spurious
forms.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

Organic
nature of the
Christian
system.

THOSE who have taken the trouble to follow the outline given in the foregoing pages of the arguments for the main principles of Christianity, whether they agree with the arguments or not, will at least have perceived that the Christian religion has a very strong case; and that the strength of it lies in the natural sequence of the arguments one from another, almost as much as in the arguments themselves. The system is an organic whole, not a mere conglomeration; one conclusion leads to the next, much as a primordial cell builds up a living structure from itself, or as every part of a building requires and implies the existence of its structural supports; and thus the reciprocal interdependence of the various doctrines of the one faith constitutes in itself an evidence of its inherent vitality and its unity of design. You cannot take away one doctrine without endangering the whole; as indeed the history of Protestant Christianity during the last

three centuries abundantly proves; and it is proximately to this logical compactness that the acknowledged strength and durability of the Catholic Church must be attributed.

There are two points to be noticed in this connection.

1. The arguments by which the main positions of Christianity are supported are manifested *ex post facto*. Christianity has not been arrived at by arguments, but precisely the reverse; the religion came first, and the arguments afterwards. It did not come into the world as a philosophy or a science, but as the revelation of a way of life; and those who embraced it at first were unconscious of many, if not all, of its necessary implications. They "knew nothing but Jesus Christ." All that was implied in that knowledge has been gradually worked out, under the pressure of every kind of hostility; and the process is still going on. The successive developments of human thought have each contributed something to the progressive result, and the enduring part of each has ultimately found its abiding place in the intellectual system of the Church; very frequently after a period of suspicion and even hostility on the Church's part.

Thus new lines of evidence have been struck out from time to time, according to the intellectual temper of the age which demanded them.

1. Arguments pre-suppose faith.

Their character varies with the temper of their age.

Each in turn represents the high-water mark of apologetic; each in turn is overpassed by a succeeding wave; and each is adequate to the need which called it forth. The methods of Butler and Paley, no less than those of Justin Martyr and Tertullian, are not obsolete, but inadequate to the present need; each has still its own value. But times have changed, knowledge has increased, and thought has run in many new channels since their day. The apologetic of no period is final, though each is sufficient for its own purpose.

2. Belief
does not
depend on
conscious
reasoning.

2. It follows that belief must ultimately rest upon some other basis than argument. All that argument can do is to remove obstacles; the initiative must remain with those powers of the soul to which argument can make no appeal. No knowledge of financial principles will of itself make a millionaire, nor can a treatise on political economy produce a patriot. As scientific discovery is the result, not of scientific learning alone, but rather of the "scientific imagination" which transcends knowledge: so faith belongs, not to the sphere of pure reason, but rather to that of the higher and nobler qualities which anticipate and transcend the reason; in which nevertheless they ultimately find their justification. It may, indeed, be a "sub-conscious"

rationation, or "illative sense" (it matters little, practically, which title is preferred) that prompts men to love or heroism; and if so, it will be the same sense or rationation that disposes them to faith. But the result is in any case the same. To be convinced is one thing, to be converted is another; one may be convinced without being converted, or converted without being convinced. It is beyond question that there are many persons who are already converted—whose hearts respond warmly to the claims of Christ, and who are conscious of the unique splendour of the Christian life, but who are not convinced, for one reason or another, of the actual truth of the principles which that life embodies, and on which that claim is based. It is for such that Christian apologetic has a high practical value.

It should be noticed, finally, that the demands made upon faith by Christianity are really very small. The Church, far from encouraging credulity, as she has often been accused of doing, really teaches an enlightened agnosticism. Her very belief in revelation implies, as we have seen, an acknowledgment of inability to know anything of its subject matter without it. The Church condemned the Gnosticism of her early days, as she still condemns the crude speculations of Theosophy and Spiritualism, for precisely the

Christianity
really
Agnostic.

same reasons as those which led Professor Huxley to invent for himself the title which has since been adopted by so many. Theology, as such, has no quarrel with even the most advanced theories of science, so long as science refrains from setting up opinions unsupported by evidence in opposition to revealed facts. What theology does oppose is the false *γνώσις*, which would, for example, attribute to matter or "substance" an eternity and infinity which cannot possibly be proved or disproved, or would deny the existence of the immaterial human soul on the strength of an extreme theory of evolution, in which immaterial being can have no place, and which can rightly have nothing to say as to the existence or non-existence of that of which it can take no account. Such theories, as distinguished from the legitimate results of physical science, are not more solid than any Gnostic imagination of a hierarchy of emanative æons; and the Church is equally opposed to both forms of irrationality.

Inclines to
positive
rather than
negative
view.

But the Christian intelligence deals with facts rather than with opinions, and with positive rather than negative quantities; it regards the contemplation of human ignorance as a mere waste of time, and desires to envisage the order of existence rather from the point of view of the Creator than from that of the creature. It

therefore prefers to speak of the mysteries of the divine wisdom rather than of man's incapacity to penetrate them; its attitude is rather that of reverence towards what is greater than itself than of criticism towards what is smaller. It recognises to the full the narrowness of the limits within which the knowledge of mankind is confined, and its own natural inability to pass beyond them into the "white radiance of eternity." But it welcomes such gleams of light as fall here and there upon the "many-coloured" sphere of terrestrial life, from whatever quarter they may come, provided only that the light is genuine, and not a mere shifting of the "shades of the prison-house"; while it knows that the small measure of absolute truth that is within human reach is to be found in the divine revelation alone.

APPENDIX

TIME AND SPACE

Note to Chapter II.

It is certain that we cannot without self-contradiction think of God as essentially existing in space or time ; that is, our conception of God as necessarily perfect excludes, when analysed, the notions of time and space, since those notions must involve limitation, and consequently imperfection.

That this is the case will appear from the following considerations. Time and space are only known to us by means of *succession* and *extension* respectively. If everything happened at once, there would be no time ; and if length, breadth, and height did not exist, there would be no space ; or at least we could have no knowledge of either. But things actually happen one after another ; or our sensations are necessarily successive. So also, in regard to space, we have no knowledge of objects otherwise than as contained by the three dimensions of length, breadth, and height. Empty space is simply the ideal possibility of the existence

Nature of
Time and
Space.

of solid objects; *i.e.*, it exists in our minds as mere length, breadth, and height without any contents.

We need not now consider whether succession and extension are properties of the external world, or are merely subjective conditions of our perception, as Kant and others have supposed them to be. In either case, they are of the nature of limitations; and the perfect being cannot be subject to any limitation, either in Himself or in His mode of action. Succession, moreover, involves change; but the perfect being must be unchangeable; and existence in space involves materiality; but the perfect being cannot be material. God must therefore be in Himself independent of time and space.

Eternity
and infinity.

Eternity and infinity are therefore not endless succession and endless extension, but conditions into which succession and extension do not enter. Time is not part of eternity, for eternity can have no parts; nor is space part of infinity, for the same reason. Even if time and space had neither beginning nor end, they would still be distinct from eternity and infinity in the strict sense; and such common phrases as "infinite space," "eternal series" are not strictly correct.

It should be noticed further that since time exists, or at least is known, by means of successive

sensible perceptions, it follows that time and space must be correlatives ; neither is conceivable without the other. Hence it would appear that in conceiving of God as immaterial, we necessarily exclude from our conception not only existence in space, but existence in time as well.

It has been contended that since our notion of Causality. causality is closely connected with time and space—causality being known to us only by means of invariable sequence in our perceptions—we cannot rightly apply the notion of causality to the transcendent or infinite being ; that which exists in time and space is due to a cause which is also in time and space ; but we cannot rightly say (it is maintained) that effects in time and space must be due to causes by which time and space are transcended. Thus it has been thought that though we must consider that everything in the world is due to a cause, we cannot say that the phenomenal world as a whole is due to a transcendent cause outside itself.

This view derives most of its force from the *A priori* Kantian idea of time and space as *a priori* forms of the intelligence, not derived from the things we perceive, but imposed upon our perception of them from within. It is evident, on this supposition, that the merely subjective conditions of our perception cannot entitle us to form any conclusion as to ^{theory.}

the nature of things in themselves, or as to their origin.

But Kant's theory seems to be a pure assumption ; not only is it incapable of proof, but ascertained facts tell strongly against it ; moreover, there appears to be no reason why the subjective character should be assigned to our conceptions of space and time only, and not extended to all abstract notions whatever.

But if time and space, with causality as involved in them, are essential conditions of things in themselves, the law of causality must be applicable to the material universe as a whole, no less than to any of its parts.

Causality
requires an
infinite cause
as founda-
tion.

But further, the law of causality requires the existence of an ultimate cause, which is only cause, and not effect. For we cannot think of an infinite chain of causation ; such a conception is in fact self-contradictory ; it cannot be both a chain and infinite. But it follows that the first cause must itself be infinite ; since if it were finite it would break the law of causality by having no cause outside itself. Being infinite, however, it cannot have a cause outside itself, since it has no outside ; the infinite alone has no external cause, or is its own cause—which is the same thing as being uncaused.

So far, therefore, from our being unable to apply

the principle of causality to the infinite or transcendent, we are really inevitably led to the infinite by the principle of causality itself; unless we could posit an infinite first cause, the principle of causality would have no foundation.

We are compelled by a necessity of thought to conceive of the finite as caused by the infinite; for the infinite alone can be conceived as self-caused. But we do not thereby apply the law of the finite to the infinite, or of the phenomenal to the transcendent, but the contrary. The principle of causality stops at the infinite, because it can go no further; but it does not stop short of it.

CONSCIENCE

Note to Chapter V.

THE theory of conscience, or the sense of duty, given here suggests an interesting and important question as to its existence in those persons who do not explicitly believe in the existence of God, or who explicitly reject such a belief. If conscience is based on the consciousness of God's existence as supreme ruler and judge, how, it may be asked,

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How can
conscience
exist without
belief in
God ?

can those who have no such consciousness be, as unquestionably they are, still capable of the idea of duty, and guided by conscience in their estimate of the moral quality of their actions? Ought not conscience to disappear, according to this theory, with the idea of God, and does not the fact that it does not so disappear, indicate that the theory is an erroneous one?

The idea
of God is
ineradicable.

The answer to these questions is that the idea of God, and the consciousness of His existence does not, in these cases, disappear from the mind of any human being; but is, as has been said above, latent. But though the idea of God's existence, as a distinctly formulated conclusion may be latent, and though the proposition that God exists may be explicitly denied, the elements of which the idea is composed, and the premises from which the conclusion is drawn, do not cease to exist in the consciousness, or to influence conduct in some degree.

The elements
of the idea
inevitably
underlie all
moral
action.

When an Agnostic or Atheist claims possession of a conscience, and ascribes certain of his actions to the influence of a sense of duty, he recognises the principle of causality as a factor of the physical and moral world; he judges of his actions by the effects they tend

to produce upon his own well-being and that of his neighbours. He further recognises a principle of stability and consistency in the world, in virtue of which, while he expects his action to modify in some degree the course of nature, he recognises his inability to revolutionise it by the introduction of new forces, or new principles; or by bringing any existing force to an end. Again he is guided in his estimate by the possession of certain ideals of perfection, such as goodness, beauty, truth, and the like, which he tries to approximate to in his own actions, and to embody to some extent in their consequence.

But these guiding principles are the elements of the idea of God: they are not things of which we can have sensible experiences, but universal ideas, which the intelligence constructs, by abstraction, from sense-knowledge. Causality is a purely mental conception; it is not cognisable by the senses: the same is true of the idea of necessary existence, which is implied in the notion of the ceaseless changes of nature upon a permanent basis: ideals of truth, beauty, and goodness are again universal ideas which correspond to nothing in the sensible world, in which we meet only with more or less true, good, and beautiful things.

But if conscience in those who reject the idea of God as a motive for action nevertheless involves the consciousness of a law or principle of causality, of necessary being underlying the contingent phenomena of the sensible world, and of an ideal perfection which can be thought, but not sensibly perceived, otherwise than as suggested by sensible things, then undoubtedly conscience in such persons does practically involve the idea of God, even though they may refuse to sum up their principles of conduct under that name.

Moral
sanction of
conscience.

An essential element in conscience is the idea of a sanction; that is, of some penalty to be paid for wrong-doing. This in the Christian view is supplied by the idea of divine justice, which rewards right action and punishes sin, either here or hereafter. By some non-theistic writers it is said to consist simply in the uneasiness which results from the transgression of the moral law; and this again is ascribed to the influence of heredity, as an inherited social instinct by which we are led to consult in our actions the welfare of others as well as our own.

But this is an attempt to escape from the natural explanation of the sense of obligation and responsibility which even the rudimentary idea of God, which is universally present in the human mind,

never fails to impose, and the attempt is obviously unsuccessful. For to explain the moral sanction of conscience as a mere survival of irrational instinct is obviously to explain it away. A moral sense depending upon such a sanction is quite evidently a mere incumbrance to a rational being, and his natural impulse would be to get rid of it, together with other instincts inherited from his brutal ancestors. If a man's altruistic tendencies cause him inconvenience, as they must, and are merely a survival of the gregarious instincts of animals which needed mutual protection or assistance, what possible reason can there be for his cherishing such tendencies, and not doing his best to suppress them? Why should he encourage in himself the inherited burden of altruism, and not rather try to expel it from his system, as he does the similar burden of the gout? The answer to the evolutionary theory of conscience is a patent *reductio ad absurdum*.

Cannot be explained without the idea of God.

Other non-theistic authorities would found the sense of duty upon the idea of the welfare of humanity; our duty is to abandon the individual standpoint for the universal. Thus we are supposed to be able to get rid of the moral sanction; and such morality is said to be "autonomous." But it does not appear how such self-abandon-

ment is possible, since humanity can never cease to be made up of individuals; nor are we told why, supposing it to be possible, we ought to make the attempt—or what sense the word “ought” can have in such a connection.

The unquestionable fact is that every man has the idea of God in his mind, rooted there and kept alive by every moment's experience of life, and he cannot get rid of it if he tries. The most he can do is to call it by some other name; to hold it, as it were, in solution by forcibly keeping its constituent elements apart in his mind, and refusing to combine them under one notion. Nevertheless, this refusal is an affair of words only; the idea is there, even though its proper name is denied to it, and he must assert its moral influence in spite of all attempts at evasion. We can never cease from the unconscious or sub-conscious reasoning, which forces the idea of God upon our minds; and it is the conclusion of such reasoning that infallibly energises in the moral qualities which we cannot help attaching to human acts.

THE CHURCH

Note to Chapter VI.

WHENEVER reference has been made to the Church in the foregoing chapters, it has always been assumed that the Church is identical with the Roman Communion. Some justification should perhaps be offered for this assumption; though it is evident that the line of argument followed is fully applicable to no other Christian body.

Without going into a controversy which has become somewhat stale and wearisome, it may be remarked that the question Which is the true Church? which is so often asked, and has been so elaborately answered, really admits of a very simple and quite satisfactory solution.

The Church, on one side, is an organised association of human beings; and its identity and persistence depend on the same conditions as those of any similar body: and such supernatural privileges as it may be held to possess must depend on the existence of those conditions. The Church, that is to say, is a concrete society, and not a mere abstraction or idea; and to discover which of the various Christian societies or "Churches" is the genuine and original one is a matter merely of observation,

The Church
is a concrete
society, not
an abstraction.

and the most elementary possible knowledge of history.

The mistake generally made is to begin the inquiry by searching for a definition of the Church; after constructing which the inquirer proceeds to consider which of the various organisations that claim his attention most nearly corresponds to his definition.

It can be identified only by consideration of facts.

But no actual association of human beings can be identified in this way. An abstract definition of a nation, or a hereditary legislature, or a club would give us little help towards discovering the actual membership of the British nation, the House of Lords, or the Athenæum Club. What we want is not a definition, but a description, and this can only be obtained from the consideration of facts; not by means of any theory, historical, philosophical, or theological. In order to find the true Church, we have not to consider any question of doctrine, organisation, or morals; but simply which of all the Christian bodies was originally founded by the Apostles, and has continued to exist without a breakdown to the present day. If no such body exists, then there can be no Church; if there is any such body, then that body is the true or genuine Church, no matter what changes may be thought to have occurred in its constitution,

or how far it may be held to have departed from its original purity of doctrine or morals. A nation does not cease to be the same nation by changing its form of government, nor a club to be the same club by altering its conditions of membership, or its rules.

Now it is evident that the present Roman Catholic Church has had a continuous existence from its foundation by the Apostles: and that all other Christian societies have had their origin by secession or expulsion from the main body. The Roman Catholic Church therefore must be—on its human side at least—the one true and genuine Church.

It has been alleged from time to time, however, that the Church has so far departed from its original principles as to forfeit its spiritual status: which has been supposed to persevere in a secession from it, such as the Donatist, the Paulician, or the Russo-Greek or Armenian bodies. But this is much as if America were to call itself the true British nation. However bad the Church may have been, it is still the Church, so long as it continues to exist. If it is so bad that it has lost its supernatural status, then, in that respect at least, there is no longer any Church in existence. That status cannot pass from one body

Continuous
existence of
the Catholic
Church.

Its status
cannot be
transferred
to any other
body.

to another merely by default, any more than shortcomings on the part of, say, the House of Commons could invest any expelled Irish members with its status and privileges.

Branch
theory.

It is sometimes maintained, again, that the Roman Catholic Church is still part of the Church indeed, but a part only, and that a corrupt part, as compared with some seceding organisation. This is what is known as the Branch theory, which supposes that the Catholic Church consists of three (or more) mutually opposed and perfectly distinct organisations. But this is really to suppose that there are normally three or more Churches; whereas *ex hypothesi* there can only be one. The invisible unity which is claimed for the "branches" is obviously not open to verification; the incontestable fact which settles the question is their visible disunion. The invisible unity resulting from race, language, and laws, which exists between England and America, does not prevent them from being two perfectly distinct nations.

View that
the Church
is merely
a group of
voluntary
associations.

Lastly, the theory held by most Protestant bodies is that there never has been any Church at all in the Catholic sense: that Christ never intended to found a Church, and that the so-called "Churches" are merely voluntary

associations for the convenience of their members, and have no supernatural status or privileges as such; the Catholic idea of ecclesiastical organisation and unity being a mere figment, imposed from interested motives upon Christians in times of ignorance and moral decay.

There is nothing in this theory to make it inconsistent with itself, as the two theories previously considered are with themselves. How far it is consistent with facts is another question: but the conclusion that there is no Church is the perfectly legitimate consequence of rejecting the Roman Catholic position.

To put the matter shortly and in theological language: the Church is to be readily identified by its manifest "note" of Apostolicity (by which is meant, as Father Ryder has well said, the continuous solidarity of the institution with the Church of the Apostles). Its other three "notes," of Unity, Sanctity, and Catholicity (or universal diffusion) are equally manifest, and both confirm the unique character which appears in the first "note," and furnish conclusive evidence that the Apostolic Church still retains its high supernatural privileges.

"Notes" of
the Church.

If, however, we found that though the Roman Church has the note of Apostolicity, any of the other

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three notes were (by an impossibility) wanting—whether they appeared elsewhere or not—then we should be driven to the conclusion that the Church had failed before its time, and that there is now no Church; since all the four notes, and not merely some of them, are required for the Church's identification. For since the note of Apostolicity manifestly belongs to the Roman Church alone, the whole four can belong to no other body whatever.

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